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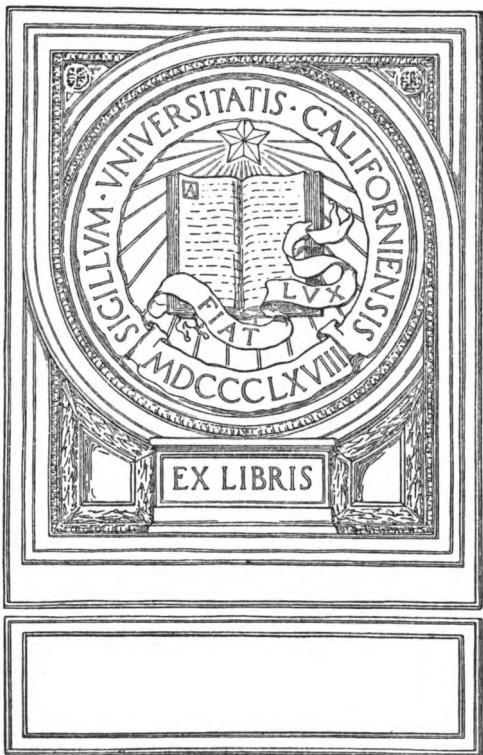


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# **THE 16th FOOT**



# THE 16<sup>TH</sup> FOOT

A History of The Bedfordshire  
and Hertfordshire Regiment

BY

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With a Foreword by

GENERAL THE EARL OF CAVAN,  
K.P.,  
COLONEL OF THE REGIMENT.

16<sup>TH</sup> FOOT  
REGIMENT

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## FOREWORD

It is pleasant to write this Foreword, because I was born in Hertfordshire within five miles of the boundary of Bedfordshire and lived there in the intervals of a School, Sandhurst and Army career for fifty-five years.

I may therefore claim to know something of the men of the two counties, and I can appreciate their worth.

My knowledge of the Regiment in War is not solely derived from this stirring book.

Three Battalions, the 1st, 7th and 8th, were in my Corps when Morval was captured in 1916.

One Battalion was in Italy with me for a short period in 1918.

The Hertfordshire Regiment joined the 4th Guards Brigade in the Ypres Salient in 1914.

Let me record that the Bedfords' name was on every Divisional Commander's lips long before the end of the Great War.

They were "Stout fellows who can be relied upon."

With Marshal Foch (see page 225), I can say with thankfulness and pride :

"I know the County men—they will hold the line."

This book will prove the truth of my words, will be an inspiration to the two well-loved counties, and will prove to all that it is, indeed, an HONOUR to subscribe myself,

CAVAN,  
Colonel of The Bedfordshire and  
Hertfordshire Regiment.

*May, 1931.*



## PREFACE

IT is a curious trait of the English that, while they are always generous of their applause of the doings of Scottish, Irish and Dominion troops in war, they but rarely display enthusiasm for the deeds of their County Regiments. Yet those regiments have from the beginning of our standing army borne the brunt of the fighting in war, and have undertaken in peace the major part of the policing of our Empire. A strange set of circumstances has caused The 16th Foot, formerly The Bedfordshire, now The Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment, to suffer from this neglect more than most. Raised in 1688, it during the first twenty-three years of its existence saw more fighting than any other single battalion regiment in the Army. In 1804 on the renewal of war with France, after the Peace of Amiens, the Regiment having a high reputation and being under an exceptionally able commanding officer, was one of the first selected for service. It was sent off to the West Indies and thence employed in the conquest of Surinam. It was kept in garrison in that colony, wasting with fever, during the greater part of the Peninsular War. Service in the West Indies and in South America being deservedly unpopular, it was difficult to obtain recruits for regiments serving in that quarter, and so The 16th was one of the few regiments which did not receive, during the Napoleonic wars, a second battalion. The second battalion was not in fact formed until 1858.

The first battle honours awarded in the British Army were conferred upon those regiments which took part in Abercrombie's Expedition to Egypt. In 1802 George III.

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authorised those regiments to wear the Sphinx subscribed with the title "Egypt." Napoleon, who knew what appealed to soldiers, and made a careful study of military morale, first made a regular practice of awarding battle honours to his regiments, an example which we followed for the regiments which had taken part in the Peninsular War and in the Battle of Waterloo. Those which fought in the Crimea received like distinctions, but The 16th missed the war with Russia, because its single battalion was once more tucked away in the West Indies, and not for many years was any consideration given to the earlier wars of our army. So it came about that in the Army Lists of the early '80's of the last century The Bedfordshire Regiment was the only one without a distinction won in war.

This soon attracted the notice of the wits in the canteens, who dubbed the Regiment the "Peacemakers," assuming it to have seen no active service at a time when it had taken part in nine wars. The Regiment was awarded its battle honours for Marlborough's Campaigns in 1883, one hundred and seventy-nine years after Blenheim, and that for the War of the League of Augsburg in 1910, two hundred and fifteen years after the event. An article in *The Times* of March 18th, 1915, suggested that the Regiment's nickname arose from the fact that it arrived in Belgium from Canada, where it had been sent during our war with the United States, just too late for Waterloo. But a like fate befell three cavalry and twenty-one Regiments of Foot, most of whom, like The 16th, formed part of the army of occupation in France. It is probable that the Waterloo Regiments chaffed the late comers and called them the "Peacemakers," and the memory of this title may have lingered on vaguely, but I am convinced that it became particularly attached to The Bedfordshire Regiment for the reason which I have given. How far it was appropriate this story will tell.

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The Regimental Association having invited me to write a short history of the Regiment to be produced at a price which would place it within the reach of all ranks, past and present, I have undertaken the task within those limits. This has precluded the provision of maps, but I have included a few outline sketches, where a good atlas would not serve. A large volume would be needed to deal at all adequately with the history of the Regiment in the Great War, and I have confined myself to a simple narrative putting the doings of each battalion in its place in the general story. The Association having expressed the wish that this short history should be truly regimental, I have included in it an account of the doings not only of the Regular, but also of the Militia, Volunteer and Territorial battalions.

I am much indebted to Captain B. L. Pavey, one of the honorary secretaries of the Regimental Association, for invaluable assistance in collecting the records of the more recent history of the Regiment, and to Mr. C. T. Atkinson for advice on the chapters dealing with Marlborough's wars.

F. MAURICE.



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# THE HISTORY OF THE BEDFORDSHIRE AND HERTFORDSHIRE REGIMENT

## CHAPTER I

### THE WAR OF THE LEAGUE OF AUGSBURG

In the year 1688 England was in a state of ferment. James II. had alienated successively the loyalty of almost every section of his subjects. Jefferey's bloody assizes and the barbarities of Kirke's "Lambs," which followed Monmouth's rising and his defeat at Sedgemoor, had disgusted the Tory gentry, who had been amongst the most devoted adherents of the Stuarts. The Declaration of Indulgence which suspended the penal laws against Catholics shocked the strong Protestant sense of the people, and the acquittal of the seven bishops who had refused to read the Indulgence was hailed with shouts of joy alike by the London populace and by the soldiers of the Army assembled at Hounslow Heath. Those soldiers had been already affronted by James's policy of replacing them from the Irish Catholic peasantry, whom the English loathed and despised.

In 1686 James had sent the Earl of Tyrconnel to govern Ireland, and the King's deputy had ruthlessly discharged many thousands of English Protestants from the army, turning out men who had served the Stuarts faithfully to face destitution ; and this policy was followed by bringing over Irish recruits to leaven the regiments quartered in England.

The disgust which these measures aroused caused the

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Whig nobles to turn their eyes to James's son-in-law, William of Orange, and messengers were constantly passing across the North Sea from them to him, until in 1688 William received a definite invitation to come over and free England from the Stuarts. James at last thoroughly alarmed, took steps to increase his army, and raised new regiments, of which The 16th and 17th Foot remain with us to-day. James conferred the colonelcy of the 16th on Lieut.-Colonel Archibald Douglas of the 1st Royal Regiment of Foot, now the Royal Scots, and Captain Robert Hodges of the same regiment became Lieut.-Colonel. The Regiment's first place of assembly was Reading, and in November 1688, it was moved to Southwark to be in readiness to join James's army, which was assembling about Salisbury to oppose William's landing at Torbay. On learning that many of his principal officers had deserted him, James, on December 11th, signed an order disbanding the Army, and on December 21st he fled from England.

The order of disbandment caused some confusion, which William quickly removed by ordering the reconstitution of the several regiments. Douglas, a member of a Scottish family which adhered to the Stuarts, threw in his lot with James, and William on December 31st, 1688 conferred the colonelcy of The 16th on Lieut.-Colonel Hodges, who reformed the Regiment at Stony Stratford.

Louis XIV. espoused the cause of the deposed monarch, and a French squadron escorted James to Ireland, where the Catholics rallied to his standard. England therefore declared war on France in May 1689, and William had the double problem of war in Ireland and upon the Continent of Europe to solve. He wisely decided to use the greater part of the Dutch and other foreign troops, who had accompanied him to England, in the civil war and to send a British contingent to Flanders to take their place on the Continent. So the first expeditionary force

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of the British regular army to proceed to the Continent of Europe sailed for Rotterdam and assembled in May under the command of the Earl of Marlborough at Maastricht. This force was composed of the 2nd Troop of Life Guards, Oxford's Horse (the Royal Horse Guards), a battalion of the 2nd (Coldstream) and of the 3rd (Scots) Guards, and of the Royal Scots, the 3rd (Buffis), 16th (Bedfords and Herts) and 21st (Royal Scots Fusiliers), together with three battalions which have no successors in the Army of to-day, Hales', Collier's and FitzPatrick's.

Marlborough's command became part of an allied army in Flanders some 40,000 strong under the Prince of Waldeck, and was opposed by a French Army of about equal strength under Marshal d'Humières. The French were making their main effort on the Rhine, so that d'Humières did not feel it necessary to be energetic, and Waldeck did not consider himself to be strong enough to be enterprising. Thus it was not until the middle of August that Waldeck crossed the Sambre near Charleroi and advanced to Walcourt, and there some twenty-five miles south-east of Mons, where The Bedfordshire Regiment fired its first shots in the Great War, The 16th Foot received its baptism of fire.

The indignation which James's importation of Irish into the British Army had provoked, provided the men of 1689 with a song for their first marches through Flanders, just as Ireland was the subject of the marching song of 1914. The occasion of Lillibullero was the appointment of Talbot, Earl of Tyrconnel to be Lieutenant of Ireland, and Burnet in his "History of Our Own Times," says of it : "A foolish ballad was made at that time, treating the Papists and chiefly the Irish in a very ridiculous manner, which had a burden said to be Irish words, 'Lero-lero Lillibullero,' that made an impression on the Army that cannot be imagined by those that saw it not. The whole Army and at last the people both in city and

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country were singing it perpetually, and perhaps never had so slight a thing so great an effect." The popularity of Lillibullero with the Army was possibly, like that of "Tipperary," mainly due to the fact that its tune had a good marching swing. It was almost certainly sung by the men of The 16th in their marches to the Sambre in 1689, as Tipperary was sung by their successors marching to Mons in 1914, and it was still in use when The 16th were marching north to Scotland in 1715 to oppose the Old Pretender. The song was therefore current during the first and most glorious period of the Regiment's story, and is worthy of a place in its history. The first verses ran :—

Ho broder Teague do'st hear de decree ?  
Lillibullero bullen la la  
Dat we shall have a new deputie.  
Lillibullero bullen la la.  
Lero lero Lillibullero ; lero-lero-bullen la la  
Lero lero lullibullero—lero-lero bullen la la.

Ho by Shaint Tyburn it is de Talbote,  
Lilli, etc.  
And he will cut all the English troate,  
Lilli, etc.  
But if dispense do come from de Pope,  
Lilli, etc.  
We'll hang Magna Charta and dem in a rope.  
Lilli, etc.

Now now de heretics all go down.  
Lilli, etc.  
By Christ and Saint Patrick de nations our own.\*  
Lilli, etc.

So on the morning of August 27th,† 1689, we may imagine the men of The 16th marching out of Walcourt

\* The words of the whole song are to be found in Percy's "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry," Vol. I., p. 368; the tune in Sterne's "Tristram Shandy," Vol. II., Chapter II.

† Old style August 17th. I use new style dates henceforth.

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under Colonel Hodges whistling "Lillibullero." Their task was to cover a number of foraging parties, and to that end Hodges posted his men in and in front of the village of Vogenée,\* where they were covered by a Dutch and Danish force. These were suddenly driven in by the advance of the French Army from Philippeville, and Hodges prepared to resist the enemy to give time for the foraging parties to withdraw. The 16th lined the hedges and held in check very superior numbers of French cavalry for two hours. Marlborough had, meanwhile, arrived and, as the foraging parties had made good their retreat and the French still came on, he withdrew Hodges and his men to a mill on the outskirts of Walcourt, where, behind walls and outbuildings, The 16th held up the French infantry until two battalions came up to their help. Finally, when d'Humières attempted a turning movement round the Allied right, Marlborough saw his opportunity and himself led a charge of the Household Cavalry, which drove the enemy back. Thus to The 16th fell the honour of being the first troops of the British Regular Army to fire a shot on the Continent of Europe. The Regiment had acquitted itself gallantly under the eyes of Britain's greatest soldier, and Waldeck was enthusiastic about their behaviour, writing to Marlborough that they had behaved admirably and displayed a most astonishing *joie de combattre*. In this their first action The 16th lost two officers and thirty men killed.

William's military organisation was still in a somewhat rudimentary state, and the British troops in Flanders suffered from lack of drafts and supplies of clothing and equipment. The cautious Waldeck therefore attempted nothing further, and in October The 16th marched to Bruges where it spent the winter, and Marlborough left Flanders for Ireland. Two hundred and twenty-five years later, the 2nd Battalion of the Regiment, on its

\* Called on old maps Forge.

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first landing on the Continent of Europe in October, 1914, was also quartered in Bruges.

Throughout 1690 King William was occupied in Ireland and the British troops in Flanders sadly neglected by the authorities at home, were mainly occupied in garrison duties, but in the following year William, after the Battle of the Boyne, was free to devote his attention to the Continent and to the prosecution of what is known as the war of the League of Augsburg, in which he was the political and military leader. In that war France, under Louis XIV. was engaged with Spain, Holland and the German Princes, and the dominating spirit on her side was Louis' great engineer, Vauban, who not only covered the land frontiers of France with his works, but at once proceeded either to fortify or restore the fortifications of almost every town captured. Sieges were therefore at the end of the seventeenth century as dominating a feature of war as trench warfare became in the Great War. Battles in the field were rare, and usually when two armies of about equal strength were facing each other, both were loth to begin the attack on a fortress, since in such a case, after a covering force and troops to protect the magazines and communications had been provided, there would not be sufficient left to prosecute the siege. Thus whole campaigns passed in marches and counter-marches, each side endeavouring to draw the other away from some place, which one or the other wished to attack. In 1691 the French succeeded in outwitting William in this manner, and they captured Mons before he could intervene, while in June, 1692, they also captured Namur.

The Duke of Luxembourg, who had succeeded d'Humières in the command of the French forces in Flanders, anxious to draw William away from Mons, marched westwards up the valley of the Sambre and then crossed that river, threatening an advance on Brussels. To cover that place William was compelled to follow,

## THE WAR OF THE LEAGUE OF AUGSBURG

and August 12th found him at Hal, where in 1815 Wellington had a detachment during the Battle of Waterloo, with Luxembourg facing him between Steenkirk and Enghien. William was eager for an opportunity to do something to counteract the loss of Mons and Namur, and the chance discovery in his camp of one of Luxembourg's most reliable spies seemed to furnish the occasion. With a pistol at his head the spy was made to write to Luxembourg that the enemy were sending out large foraging parties the next morning, but that nothing serious was intended, and before daylight the next morning William advanced to attack the French right at Steenkirk. The attack was a surprise, and ought to have succeeded if the troops had been well handled, for Luxembourg had, owing to the state of the roads, left much of his artillery at Mons, and had to weaken himself to garrison Namur, while it was some time before he realised that something more than foraging was intended by the enemy. If William's advanced guard, composed of four British and two Danish battalions, had been promptly supported, the French line would almost certainly have been broken, but the country was enclosed and William had blocked the main body of his infantry by placing his cavalry in front of it. So it was not until noon that more British battalions and a British cavalry brigade came up to support the Duke of Würtemberg who commanded the advanced guard. The British infantry, by a determined advance, broke through three lines of defence and had all but penetrated the fourth and last and entered the French camp, when they were in turn attacked and driven back by the French and Swiss guards, whom Luxembourg had been given time to bring up. While this fierce fight had been taking place on the outskirts of Steenkirk the main body of William's infantry, prevented by the cavalry from reaching the field, had been idle and impatient spectators of the struggle. In that main body were The 16th, and to

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them together with the 1st Battalion of the Coldstream Guards and the 7th Fusiliers it fell to cover the retreat, a task skilfully and manfully accomplished at a heavy cost, the gallant Hodges being amongst the killed. In this first pitched battle in the history of the Regular Army, the British infantry had played a glorious part, and only blundering had robbed them of victory. William had actively engaged some 15,000 men, of whom 8,000 were British and the losses are recorded as being 4,713 killed and 3,543 wounded, or more than 50 per cent. of the troops in action.

Luxembourg, thankful to have escaped defeat at Steenkirk, remained for the rest of the year quietly watching the frontier, while William, to repair the losses of the battle, brought out fifteen more battalions from England, and The 16th were sent with some of these reinforcements to occupy and fortify Furnes, which for a time during the Great War was the headquarters of the King of the Belgians, and Dixmude, which figures prominently in the Battles of Ypres. While The 16th was in garrison at Dixmude, the troops were startled by that rare occurrence in Northern Europe, an earthquake, which was of such violence that the soldiers at first thought that the French had left behind them spies to explode buried mines.

For the campaign of 1693 William assembled his army at Park, near Louvain, to cover Brussels against Luxembourg, who had returned to the Meuse with the object of attacking the fortresses of Huy and Liége. William's army had now been increased to 60,000 men, of whom 17,000 were British, the latter being formed in two cavalry and four infantry brigades. The 16th with The 14th and 19th Foot and Collingwood's Regiment formed Erle's Brigade, and were now commanded by the Hon. James Stanley, afterwards Earl of Derby, on whom William had conferred the colonelcy after Hodges' death.

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Louis XIV. joined his army to witness the fall of Liége, but finding that William was too strong to allow of the risk of a siege being undertaken, he went back to Paris, and there followed the usual game of manœuvre and counter-manœuvre, in which Luxembourg induced William to make detachments, which reduced the strength of the Allies to 46,000 men, and when he found him in position near Neerwinden between the Landen Beck and the Little Geete he decided to attack him on July 29th with 80,000 men. In the Battle of Landen Erle's Brigade, 3,000 strong, held the Allied left at Rumsdorp, and there they were attacked by a French column 13,000 strong, and, not unnaturally, they were driven out of the village, but being reinforced, they counter-attacked and re-established a line on its outskirts, where they held on until the collapse of the centre and right enforced retreat. The key of the position was the village of Neerwinden, held by the Allied centre. Two fierce French attacks on the centre and left were repulsed mainly by the valour of the British infantry, amongst whom the Coldstream Guards and the 7th Fusiliers especially distinguished themselves, but the third attack succeeded after desperate fighting, and William's front was broken. As at Steenkirk, it fell to The 16th, who had maintained their order at Rumsdorp, with the rest of Erle's Brigade to cover the retreat. William retreated to Louvain, where he was rejoined by his detachments, and Luxembourg contented himself with occupying Charleroi. At the end of the campaign The 16th went into winter quarters at Dendermond (Termonde) on the Dender, about midway between Ghent and Antwerp.

The campaign of 1694 proved to be another of marches and counter-marches. The French, having occupied Furnes, proceeded to establish an almost complete trench barrier to secure their gains from Furnes along the Lys and Scheldt by Mons and Charleroi to Namur. Luxem-

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bourg, manœuvring in front of this barrier, kept William vainly seeking an opportunity to strike an effective blow, always to find himself anticipated by the skilful Frenchman, and in the autumn, The 16th returned to Dendermonde, having marched many weary miles without result.

The year 1695 brought a change for the better in the fortunes of the Allies. The French were obliged to weaken their field army to garrison the places which they had captured, and they had been more seriously weakened by the death of Luxembourg who, in four successive campaigns, had successfully outmanœuvred William. Luxembourg was feeble of frame, but of indomitable spirit, and a master of the military methods of his day. It is said that William irritated by finding himself continually foiled, once exclaimed, "What ! am I never to beat this hump-backed fellow ?" and that Luxembourg, on this being reported to him, answered, "How should he know the shape of my back, for it is certain that I have never turned it to him ?" Luxembourg was succeeded by Villeroi, destined for many years to be an unsuccessful opponent of the British.

While the French field army had diminished William had strengthened his by increasing the British contingent, which, at the beginning of the campaign of 1695, numbered 29,000 men. He began the campaign by threatening the line of the Lys and, when he had drawn Villeroi's attention westwards, he marched rapidly to Namur. The 16th were once again in Erle's Brigade and, with the Brigade of Guards, formed Ramsay's Division. Namur was one of the most formidable of the fortresses of the day. Its works, designed by the famous Dutch engineer, Coehorne, had been reconstructed after its capture by the French in 1692, by the still more famous Vauban. The defences of the place were in three parts ; north of the town on the heights of Bouge was a formidable system of outworks, then came the main defences of the town, and

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lastly, in the angle between the Sambre and the Meuse, stood the citadel.

William began by attacking the Bouge outworks, and against these the besiegers opened their trenches on June 28th and the bombardment on July 3rd. William, fearful that Villeroi would arrive to interrupt the siege, pressed the attack, and on July 7th all was ready for the first assault. The main assault was entrusted to Ramsay's Division and on that day Erle's Brigade was in the trenches and were to be relieved by the Guards Brigade. It was arranged that the relieving troops should lead the attack, supported by the troops in the trenches. The attack began at sunrise and the fury of attack of the Guards reinforced from the trenches by The 14th and 16th Foot, drove the enemy from work to work. Not only was the objective, the main works on the Bouge ridge captured, but the whole of the outlying works, except one redoubt, fell into the hands of the Allies, and the flying enemy was pursued to the gates of the town.

Trenches were then opened against the works of the town, and on July 17th there followed the famous attack on the counterscarp in which Uncle Toby received his wound. The attack was led by the grenadier companies of all regiments, supported by two columns of British and Dutch. Sterne's account of the enterprise, to the explanation of which Uncle Toby devoted so much time and care, is brief and to the point : "One of the most memorable attacks in that siege was that which was made by the English and Dutch upon the front of the advanced counterscarp between the gate of St. Nicholas, which enclosed the great sluice or water-stop, where the Englishmen were terribly exposed to the shot of the counter-guard and demi-bastion St. Roch ; the issue of which hot dispute in three words was this, that the Dutch lodged themselves upon the counter-guard and the English made themselves masters of the covered way before St. Nicholas

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Gate notwithstanding the gallantry of the French officers, who exposed themselves upon the glacis sword in hand." \*

Both the ensigns of the Grenadier Company of The 16th fell in this attack, Ensign Gardener being killed and Ensign Devereux wounded, while a few days later the captain of the company, Holiday, was wounded in extending the lodgement on the covered way. The enemy then surrendered the town and fell back into the citadel. The 16th took their turn in the trenches before the citadel until August 11th, when leaving their Grenadier Company to take part in the continuance of the attack, they were sent off to reinforce the covering force, as the advance of Villeroi had become a menace to the siege. In the assault on the citadel the Grenadiers of The 16th lost another officer killed, and the enemy finally surrendered on September 2nd. Villeroi thereupon withdrew behind his lines, and The 16th having, after seven years' campaigning, gloriously won their first battle honour † went back to winter in Dendermond.

The campaigns of 1696 and 1697 were again marked by manœuvre without any definite result, William not feeling strong enough to attempt to force the French lines. In the former year he was compelled to recall home some twenty British battalions of his expeditionary force to meet an abortive attempt by Louis to invade England, in the latter both sides were weary of the long struggle. Louis felt deeply the loss of Namur and the deaths of his best General, Luxembourg, and of his War Minister, Louvois, while his country needed rest from a war on three fronts. So the Treaty of Ryswick brought a brief peace to Europe. Louis' ambitions had been checked, though not mated, by William's resolution.

The war of the League of Augsburg is remarkable despite the dulness of its military operations, not merely

\* Sterne's "Tristram Shandy," Vol. II., Chapter I.

† Awarded 210 years after the event, in March, 1910.

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because it saw the first soldiers of the British Regular Army fighting on the Continent of Europe, but because it saw the dawn of a revolution in warfare. The British infantry at Steenkirk, Landen and Namur had taught the French, then the spoiled children of victory, to respect them, and British infantry was then only beginning to come into its own. During the war the first experiments were made with the ring bayonet, which allowed the foot soldier to fire his piece while prepared to meet the attack of cavalry, then the decisive arm in battle. This brought about the gradual abolition of the pike men, and the organisation of the infantry in ranks three deep, to which may be traced the origin of that "thin red line" destined to decide the issue of many a battle. England had ready the master fitted to use the new instrument, to stir up the stagnation of a warfare of fortresses and defensive lines, and to restore mobility and manœuvre to their proper place.

"The size and armament of battle ships and tactical methods of warfare at sea underwent no great change between the days of Blake and the days of Nelson. But the methods of warfare on land, when Marlborough took command at the beginning of Anne's reign, had just undergone a great change from the methods of Gustavus Adolphus and Cromwell. Ever since the Restoration the bayonet had been gradually coming in, and after the lesson of Killiecrankie,\* William's reign saw the general adoption of the ring bayonet that could be left on while the gun was being discharged. Consequently the pike-men who had composed half the regiment in Cromwell's day were altogether abolished ; henceforth there was but one type of infantry private, with his firelock ending in the dagger bayonet. In connection with this change of weapon, the six-deep formation of the infantry column, suitable to pikes, was changed to a thin line of three deep,

\* 1689.

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as the method of concentrating the greatest volume of fire upon an enemy. Already we are in the realm of infantry tactics employed by Frederic the Great and Wellington, though the drill of the infantry was not so perfect or their manœuvres so flexible as in those later times. Cavalry, as at Blenheim and Ramillies, would still decide battles, but their place in war was already smaller than in Cromwell's day owing to the increase in the efficiency of the 'poor Foot.' " \*

During nine years of continuous active service in Flanders The 16th had played a worthy part in the process of raising the "poor Foot" from the position of the drudge to that of the master of the battlefield. Steenkirk, Landen and Namur were not forgotten in France.

\* Trevelyan, "History of England," p. 495.

## CHAPTER II

### THE WAR OF THE SPANISH SUCCESSION

ON the conclusion of the peace of Ryswick, The 16th were sent to Ireland, where the still unsettled state of the country required the largest garrison. Parliament celebrated peace by setting an example, which its successors were careful to follow in future generations, by passing an Act of Disbandment abolishing a number of regiments,\* and drastically reducing the establishment of the remainder. Within less than three years the King's Ministers had to set about repairing this work of destruction, for in 1700 Louis XIV., after the death of Charles II. of Spain, claimed the throne for his grandson Philip, sent him to Madrid with the famous phrase of the Spanish Ambassador in Paris, "There are no more Pyrenees," and followed this by seizing the frontier fortresses of the Spanish Netherlands, which had been bones of contention during the War of the League of Augsburg, Luxembourg, Namur, Mons, Charleroi, Ath, Oudenarde, Nieuport, and Ostend. These places had been ceded by France under the Treaty of Ryswick, and acquiescence in this high-handed action and in the union of France and Spain would have meant the ruin of the whole of William's policy. So Parliament reluctantly agreed to the despatch of twelve battalions from Ireland to Holland, and The 16th, embarking from Carrickfergus on June 7th, 1701, went to Breda, where, with the rest of the British contingent, it was reviewed by William. Both

\* Owing to fear of rebellion the Irish establishment was nearly double that of the English, and many regiments like The 16th owed their preservation to the fact that they formed part of the garrison of Ireland.

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Parliament and people were, however, reluctant to commit themselves definitely to war, until, in September, 1701, Louis, on the death of James II., committed the blunder of recognising his son as King of England. This aroused England to fury, existing regiments were raised to war establishment, fifteen new ones were raised, and the country became committed to the War of the Spanish Succession. William had entrusted the negotiations for the formation of the Grand Alliance of the Emperor, Holland and England against France to Marlborough, and it was agreed that England should provide an army of 40,000 men, of whom 18,000 were to be British. Marlborough's agreement had barely been ratified when, on March 4th, 1702, William, on a ride in the park of Hampton Court, was thrown when his horse tripped over a mole hill, and died from the effects of the fall. So "the little gentleman in velvet" became for many years a favourite Jacobite toast. Marlborough's influence with Anne was sufficient to prevent any interference with William's plans ; the British contingent in Holland was reinforced, and Marlborough eventually assumed command of the Allied forces in the Netherlands.

Louis' high-handed action in the previous year had secured for him the possession of the Spanish Netherlands, and the French had in Brabant an army of 90,000 men at the gates of Holland, greatly to the alarm of the Government of that country, which was in its opinion somewhat precariously protected by the fortresses of Maastricht and Nimeguen. Marlborough, with a wider outlook on the field of war, considered that the defection of the Elector of Cologne and the fact that the fortress of Kaiserswerth on the Rhine was in the hands of his enemy was of greater importance, for Kaiserswerth interrupted communication between the Allies in the north and the forces of the Emperor on the Upper Danube. He therefore began the campaign of 1702 by arranging for the

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siege of that place, leaving a force under the Duke of Athlone, of which a British brigade under Ingoldsby formed part, to cover the siege. The 16th, in Ingoldsby's Brigade, were, in June, at Cranenburg, engaged in this task when Boufflers, Marlborough's French opponent, made a sudden dash for Nimeguen, counting on the fears of the Dutch to cause the relief of Kaiserswerth. Athlone marched rapidly north to protect Nimeguen, and on June 10th was surprised by Boufflers, only the gallant conduct of Ingoldsby's men enabling him to withdraw under the guns of the fortress. The British infantry is described as having in this action behaved "extremely well," and they inflicted on the French losses which exceeded their own by five to one. Thus The 16th began their second war, as they had their first, by gallant conduct in a rearguard action. On June 15th Kaiserswerth fell and Marlborough, then definitely appointed to the supreme command of the Allies in the Low Countries, set about clearing the French from the lower Meuse in order to allay the fears of his Dutch allies and to secure his base and communications. Venloo, Ruremond and Stevenswerthe were successively captured, The 16th in each case forming part of the covering force, and on October 13th Marlborough, having outmanœuvred Boufflers, much as in the previous war Luxembourg had outmanœuvred William, appeared before Liége. The town opened its gates to him, but the French held the citadel, which was stormed by the British, amongst them The 16th, after a ten days' siege.

Marlborough wrote home praising highly "the vigorous behaviour of the Queen's subjects." This ended the campaign. England, comparing its results with the meagre achievements of William, was delighted. Marlborough, on his return home, was enthusiastically received, and the Queen conferred on him a dukedom with a life pension of £5,000 ; but the British regiments

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on whom, as usual, the brunt of the work fell, received no recognition, and it would seem but just to repair that omission by allowing those, so warmly commended by Marlborough, who took part in the capture of Liége, to add that name to their list of honours. The operations of 1702 and 1703 made the march to Blenheim possible, and campaigns which bring a dukedom to the Commander-in-Chief surely merit some recognition for his men.

In 1703 Marlborough, though much hampered by the hesitations of his Dutch colleagues, continued his policy of securing Holland and of opening up communications with the Danube. He began the campaign with a rapid march up the Rhine, and in May had gained possession of Bonn, then returning northward, he besieged and took Huy and Limburg, The 16th taking part in the capture of both those places. Having cleared the Meuse as far as Namur and also the lower Rhine, the Duke was able to turn his mind to greater projects. His first idea was to move up the Moselle to threaten the flank and communications of the French on the upper Rhine, but learning early in 1704 of the straits of the Imperial forces he changed this plan for the bolder conception of a march to the Danube. It was indeed high time for some decisive action on the part of the Allies, for Marlborough's campaigns in the north had, if they had relieved Holland from danger, barely shaken the French hold on Brabant, while from the Upper Rhine the French had advanced through the Black Forest, the Imperial troops had been beaten in September at Hochstadt on the Danube, the French had definitely made good a junction with the forces of the Elector of Bavaria, and the road to Vienna lay open to him. No capture of fortresses in Holland could compensate for a further defeat of the Imperialists and the occupation by the French of the Emperor's capital.

Marlborough's plan for a junction of his army with the

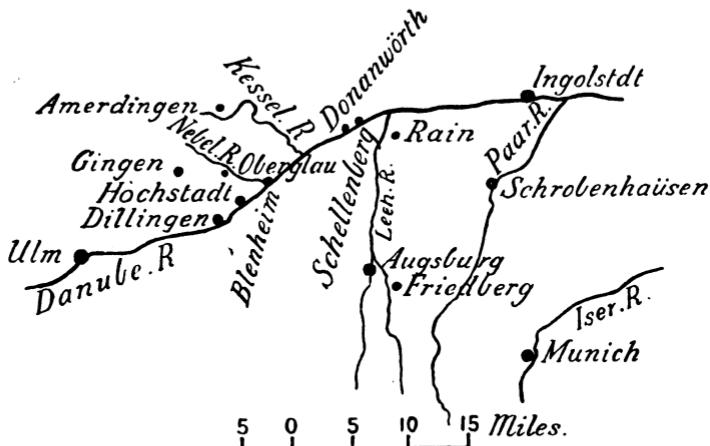
## THE WAR OF THE SPANISH SUCCESSION

Imperial forces on the Upper Danube entailed a march of over 300 miles, and a considerable part of this movement would be a flank march, somewhat precariously covered by an Allied force under Prince Louis of Baden, in the lines of Stolhofen, in the northern part of the Black Forest, across the front of the French armies on the left bank of the Rhine. For security, mobility and secrecy were essential. It was necessary that the Duke should deceive not only his enemy, but also his Dutch allies, who would have contemplated the removal of the northern army to so distant a field with horror, and were, with reluctance, induced to agree to a campaign on the Moselle, which Marlborough made his ostensible object. His preparations for that campaign served him for the bolder march to the Danube and contributed to the deception of friend and foe. On May 16th he arrived at Bedburg, midway between Ruremond on the Meuse and Cologne, to find himself at the head of ninety squadrons and fifty-one battalions, of which nineteen squadrons and fourteen battalions were British. Charles Churchill, the Duke's brother, was the "General of Foot"; the British infantry was organised in three brigades, The 16th being in Ferguson's brigade. Marlborough himself led the cavalry forward on May 20th by rapid marches to the junction of the Rhine and Moselle at Coblenz, where the infantry arrived on May 27th, not a man having an inkling of his destination. Captain Parker of The 18th Royal Irish, who has left one of the few contemporary accounts by a British eye-witness of the Blenheim campaign, writes of the arrival of the Foot at Coblenz: "When we expected to march up the Moselle to our surprise we passed that river over a stone bridge and the Rhine over two bridges of boats." At Coblenz the army was joined by contingents from Hanover and Prussia. From Coblenz Marlborough moved up the Rhine as if to threaten Alsace, which drew his opponents

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Villeroi and Tallard together, the former from the Moselle, the latter from the Black Forest, to protect that province. Villeroi had succeeded Boufflers in command in Brabant and on learning of Marlborough's movement up the Rhine, he, as the Duke had anticipated, came south with 25,000 men to cover Lorraine, thus relieving Holland of danger. On reaching Ladenburg, Marlborough crossed the Neckar and turned away from

### *Environs of Blenheim*



Alsace, heading south-east across the northern end of the Black Forest for Ulm on the Danube. His real object was there disclosed for the first time, but by then his junction with the Imperial forces was assured. He had mystified and misled his enemy, while causing his Dutch friends to cry out in alarm when interference was no longer likely to be effective. The marches from Coblenz to Ulm through hilly country, over despicable roads, and in wretched weather, put a heavy strain upon the infantry. "This is like," wrote Captain Blackader of The 26th,

"to be a campaign of great fatigue and trouble." While Sergeant Millner of The 18th says on the arrival of the infantry at Setten in the Black Forest on June 12th : "A little town most inhabited by Jews where we had scarcity of beer but plenty of wine : there we were obliged to halt two days by the badness of the weather, which stopt our train." He calls the road from Setten onwards "very deep, heavy and tedious."

Marlborough watched the fatigues of his men with a careful and understanding eye, and his forethought in arranging contracts with the German States had provided them with boots, money and supplies as and when they were needed on the long march. His men were not slow to appreciate the efforts of "Corporal John" on their behalf, and Parker wrote : "As we marched through the countries of our Allies commissaries were appointed to furnish us with all manner of necessaries for man and horse : these were brought to the ground before we arrived and the soldiers had nothing to do but to pitch their tents and boil their kettles and 'lie down to rest.' Surely never was such a march carried on with more order and regularity and with less fatigue." The pay-masters well provided with cash paid the troops regularly, and they were able to buy their beer, wine and other luxuries, a contrast to the behaviour of other armies which the inhabitants were quick to notice. Marauding became unnecessary, discipline was better maintained, and supplies of all kinds were willingly made available. So when at Mondleheim, on June 9th, the Duke first met the colleagues with whom he was to fight, they were astonished at the fine condition of his troops after such efforts.

There Marlborough and Prince Eugene made acquaintance, and Eugene's arrival was followed by that of Prince Louis of Baden, a slow, methodical and conscientious General, who was a great stickler for military etiquette

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and very jealous of his position, therefore a far less attractive collaborator than the brilliant Prince of Savoy. Finally it was arranged between the three that Eugene should take command of the covering force of Imperial troops at Stolhofen on the north-western edge of the Black Forest and watch the French in Alsace, while Marlborough and Louis, when their forces were united, were to command on alternate days.

The junction was completed on June 27th at Gingen, where the combined forces amounted to 200 squadrons, 96 battalions and 48 guns, approximately 60,000 men. The situation now was that Villeroi and Tallard, with some 60,000 men, were about Strasbourg watched by Eugene at Stolhofen with about half that number. In Bavaria a Franco-Bavarian army of about 40,000 men under the Elector and Marsin had withdrawn in alarm, on Marlborough's advance, to an entrenched camp at Dillingen. Marlborough's object was to secure Donauwörth, which would give him a bridge over the Danube, allow him to open up a new line of communication with Nüremberg, and provide him with an advanced base for operations in Bavaria, covering Vienna. His turn eastwards had made his intention clear to the Elector, who hurried forward a picked force under Count d'Arco to reinforce the garrison of Donauwörth. The key to this place was the height of the Schellenberg, which had been partially entrenched. The Allies, arrived at Amerdingen, were within reach of the Schellenberg on July 1st, and the next day Marlborough was in command. To the alarm of the cautious Louis, he determined to use his twenty-four hours to assault the Schellenberg before the defences could be completed, and the enemy reinforced. Marlborough formed his columns of assault of picked detachments of equal strength from each of his forty-five battalions, making 6,000 infantry supported by thirty squadrons, The 16th, of course, providing one of these

detachments. These he led forward himself, and behind them came the main body under Prince Louis. Marlborough started from Amerdingen, a good fourteen miles from the Schellenberg, at 3 a.m. on July 2nd, and this start proved to be none too early. Bad roads and the destruction of bridges delayed the column, and it was not until 5 p.m. that the assault could be begun. Arco relying on the practice of the day had believed, no more than Prince Louis, in the possibility of a sudden attack upon troops in a strong defensive position, and had proceeded leisurely with the preparation of his defences. The hill itself was well prepared, but the trenches connecting it with the town had been neglected. At 5 p.m., after a brief bombardment, Marlborough sent his grenadier companies forward. The Bavarian infantry fought stoutly. Three times were the assaults of the grenadiers repulsed, but three times the attack was pressed with such gallantry and determination as to draw almost the whole of Arco's troops to the defence of the hill. This was what Marlborough wanted, for when the main body came up it walked through the defences between the hill and the town, molested only by gunfire from the walls. The flank of the defenders of the Schellenberg was turned and they fled in confusion ; by 7 p.m., Marlborough's men had triumphantly crowned the hill.

The battle if short was fierce, the losses of the Allies were over 5,000, and the enemy casualties are said to have been twice as many. The picked detachments were approximately 130 strong, and that of The 16th suffered 60 casualties, 2 officers and 20 rank and file being killed, 3 officers and 35 rank and file wounded. The approximate strength of the British troops engaged, 14 detachments, 5 battalions from the main body and the cavalry, was 6,000, and of them 115 officers and 1,437 other ranks fell. In this first victory in the field on the Continent the British troops had, as at Steenkirk and

Landen, borne the brunt, but with greater fortune. Marlborough wrote : "The English in particular have gained a great deal of honour in this action . . . the warmest that has been known for many years." A parsimony on the part of authority which is in marked contrast to the lavishness of more recent times has denied the Schellenberg as a battle honour to the regiments which took so glorious a part in the action. Marlborough's judgment in hastening the attack was more than justified by the arrival of the Elector of Bavaria with reinforcements only in time to meet d'Arco's flying troops.

The loss of Donauwörth caused the Elector to apply urgently to Villeroi for reinforcements. The latter, on learning of Marlborough's movement eastwards from Ulm, had begun to cross the Rhine at Kehl, and he now sent Marshal Tallard with 35,000 men forward to join the Elector. Tallard, marching by the southern bank of the Danube, joined the Elector near Augsburg on August 5th. Meantime Marlborough had besieged and captured the little fortress of Rain on the Lech and had then moved up that river to Friedberg, which is opposite to Augsburg, where he found his enemy to be too strongly posted even for his taste. Eugene at Stolhofen, on hearing of Tallard's move, had left the bulk of his infantry at Stolhofen to hold Villeroi in check, and had boldly marched with seventy squadrons and twenty battalions north of the Danube to Hochstadt, where he arrived at about the same time as Tallard and the Elector had joined forces. On hearing of the latter event, the Duke moved his army northwards to Schrattenhausen to be within supporting distance of Eugene, who came over to that place to concert plans with Marlborough. Both were now eager to find a favourable opportunity for battle, and partly as a challenge to the Elector, partly to find occupation for an uncongenial colleague, Prince Louis was induced to undertake with 15,000 men the siege of Ingolstadt, a

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fortress of strategic importance, while Eugene's and Marlborough's forces remained separated as if to invite attack, but within supporting distance. Hardly had Louis moved off when the Duke learned that the trap had been successfully baited, and that the French were marching to attack Eugene at Hochstadt. Eugene, as agreed, fell back behind the Kessel, and Marlborough at once moved forward, joining him on that river late on August 11th, the French being then on the Nebel with their right at Blenheim, a position which they at once began to strengthen.

Tallard neither desired nor expected battle. It was not, as I have said, in accordance with the military doctrines of the day to attack an enemy of equal strength well posted, and he expected to force the Duke to withdraw to seek supplies. But Marlborough was determined not to let the opportunity slip. August 12th was spent in reconnaissance and in resting the infantry, who had had a hard day's marching on the 11th to join Eugene. The enemy's right was on the Danube at the village of Blenheim, along his front flowed the Nebel brook, a stream insignificant in itself but with marshy banks which made it a considerable obstacle, his left rested on the villages of Oberglau and Lutzingen. Marlborough observing this position, noted that the army of Marshal Tallard, which was on the right, and that of the Elector and Marsin, which held the left, were organised separately, each with cavalry on the wings. Thus the point of junction, always a military weakness, was occupied by cavalry supported by a weak body of infantry, and upon this he based his plan of battle, which was that Lord Cutts with a part of the infantry, in which his three British infantry brigades were the chief element, should attack Blenheim and so hold Tallard's infantry to its ground, while Eugene should attack the enemy's left and keep the Elector's infantry busy; when these attacks

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were launched, he proposed himself to cross the Nebel and break the opposing centre with the whole of his cavalry supported by the remainder of his infantry.

The British records of the Blenheim campaign are unfortunately scanty. While the losses in officers are recorded,\* there is no complete list of casualties by regiments, and Marlborough's organisation of his army is not certainly known. The order of battle which Fortescue,† following Dumont, gives is clearly incorrect, since it includes The 20th Foot, which had no part in Blenheim, and omits The 18th, which certainly had. Further, it puts Ferguson's brigade in the second line, and there is definite evidence that it was in the first line. The most reliable distribution seems to me to be that on the plan of the battle prepared by Colonel Ivoy, the Duke's Quartermaster-General.‡ The British infantry were, according to Ivoy, organised into :

Row's Brigade . . . .	15th
	23rd
	24th
	21st
	10th
Ferguson's Brigade . . . .	16th
	26th
	18th
	1st Royal Scots
	1st First Guards
Webb's Brigade . . . .	3rd
	37th
	2nd Royal Scots
	8th

Row's and Ferguson's brigades were, as Ivoy shows, in the first line, and Webb's in the second line. Row's

\* *Vide* Dalton's "Blenheim Roll."

† "History of the British Army," Vol. I., p. 445.

‡ *Vide* Dartmouth Memorandum Journal United Service Institution, 1898.

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brigade made the first assault on Blenheim, and Ferguson's the second assault, and Ivoy shows The 16th and 26th as leading Ferguson's brigade. Now the five battalions of Row's brigade and The 16th and 26th were those which according to the Blenheim roll suffered most heavily. Webb's brigade was, as we shall see, diverted from the attack on Blenheim to an easier task, and the battalions allotted by Ivoy to Webb suffered according to the Blenheim roll the least loss. Ivoy's distribution therefore tallies both with what is known of the fighting and of the casualties, and accordingly I place The 16th in Ferguson's Brigade leading, with The 26th, the second assault on Blenheim.

It is not the business of a regimental historian to give the complete details of this oft described battle. It will suffice to say that it was fought nearly as Marlborough had planned to fight it. Eugene's attack was delayed by the difficulty of his approach march, and when it was delivered about noon, its success was for a time imperilled by the gallantry of Marsin's Irish contingent in Oberglau, the famous "wild geese," but Marlborough's watchful eye saw the danger in time, and provided Eugene with the needed assistance. With this we may turn to the attack on Blenheim, against which Cutts directed the British, Hanoverian and Hessian infantry. On seeing Cutts advance, Tallard poured the bulk of his infantry into Blenheim to meet him, thus acting just as Marlborough hoped he would do. Meeting superior numbers in a strong position, the successive attacks of Row's and Ferguson's Brigades were repulsed, but they fulfilled their purpose in keeping Tallard's infantry fully occupied in the village. After the failure of Cutts' second attack on Blenheim, Marlborough directed him to hold the enemy without further assault, and moved Webb's Brigade to reinforce Churchill, who commanded the infantry of the centre, and to support his decisive blow.

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While Eugene had the Elector hard pressed on the enemy's left, and Cutts was preventing any withdrawal from Blenheim, Marlborough led his cavalry supported by Churchill's infantry against the centre, and broke it. This movement was triumphantly successful. It severed the two parts of the opposing army. The Elector, finding himself cut off from Tallard, began a hasty retreat, and while Marlborough's cavalry were pursuing the enemy to the Danube, Webb's infantry, fighting their way round north of Blenheim, cut off, with the aid of The Scots Greys and Irish Dragoons, supported by The Buffs, the escape of the French infantry from that village. Tallard himself was captured while hastening to his right to obtain help for his menaced centre, and by 8 p.m., twenty-four of the finest French infantry regiments and four regiments of dragoons laid down their arms in Blenheim.

As Sergeant Millner was present at the battle with The 18th, which was in Ferguson's Brigade with The 16th, we may turn to his account of the battle for more picturesque detail. After describing how the army marched at 3 a.m. on August 13th from Münster in nine columns, he goes on : " We made a halt to observe the enemy, whom we did not perceive to make any motion. About six the Duke and Prince Eugène called to them on a rising ground all the generals and gave to them the necessary directions to attack the enemy ; and then our army advanced into the Plain, and were drawn up in the order of battel at about seven. The enemy at the approach of our vanguard gave a signal, by the firing of two pieces of cannon, to call in all their foragers, and set the villages of Onderklaw, Volperstet, Viller, Oufhaussen and Sweineback on fire ; we saw all their camp in a motion ; their generals and their aide-de-camps galloping to and fro to put all things in order ; and at the same time Lord Cutts, Lieut.-General, and Major-Generals St. Paul and Wilks,

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with Brigadiers Row and Ferguson, with two Brigadiers \* of Foot, to be supported by Major-General Wood with fifteen squadrons, were ordered on our left to possess themselves of the two water-mills near Blenheim, which the enemy immediately set on fire. . . . To favour the passage of our left wing, Lord Cutts, with the two aforesaid Brigadiers \* was ordered to pass the rivulet first, which done they posted themselves in a bottom near the village of Blenheim ; and for several hours with wonderful resolution they stood the fire of six pieces of cannon, planted on the height near that village ; and at the same time the enemy fired very smart and brisk on the bridges that were held for the passage of our Foot, but they were quickly answered by two of our batteries, the one of English the other of Dutch ; which cannonading did considerable execution on both sides. . . . Both armies cannonaded each other very smartly and vigorously with several batteries from eight in the morning till past twelve at noon, with great loss. A little before one o'clock in the afternoon, all being ready to begin the attack, the Duke ordered the left to begin ; immediately Major-General Wilks with Brigadier Row and his five battalions of English made the first onset of attack. . . . Those five battalions led by Brigadier Row, advanced on with undaunted courage, and with unparalleled intrepidity attacked the village of Blenheim on the muzzles of the enemy, and some of the officers exchanged thrusts of swords with the French through their pallisades, but being exposed to a fire much superior than their own, they were soon forced to retire with a loss of nearly a third part of their men, either killed or wounded, and their Brigadier mortally wounded, of which he died a few days after ; and being pursued by thirteen squadrons of the French Gens d'Armes and Carabineers, they would have entirely cut them to pieces, had not the Hessian

\* Brigades.

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Foot by a great fire put a sudden stop to their career ; and by that time, five squadrons of English having passed the rivulet, chased and made the enemy fly in their turn ; but whilst they rallied some fresh brigades of the enemy, superior in number, charged our horse with great vigour, and obliged them to repass the rivulet with precipitation, and here again the Hessian Foot performed notable service in putting the enemy to the route by a continual fire, and regained the Colours which Row's Regiment \* had lost, and while Row's brigade rallied, Ferguson with his brigade attacked Blenheim on the left, but with no better success, and though both returned three or four times to the charge with equal vigour and valour, yet both were still repulsed with like disadvantage, so that it was found impossible to force the enemy out of that post without entirely sacrificing our foot."

This gives us a clear picture of the part played by The 16th in the battle. They had first of all the long, trying wait of more than four hours on the right bank of the Nebel opposite Blenheim, pounded by the enemy's guns while Eugene was slowly getting into position on the right. Then they witnessed the failure of the assault of Row's Brigade and its repulse by a hostile counter-attack, till their turn came to advance with The 26th at the head of Ferguson's Brigade to the second assault on Blenheim. In this their repeated and desperately gallant efforts to drive the enemy from the village failed against superior numbers, but they succeeded in forcing the pick of the French infantry from its outskirts, and in preventing them from supporting their centre. Then followed another and still more trying wait under fire, until the Duke's main attack, which their desperate fighting had so well prepared, brought them their reward and the surrender of the foe whom they had held in Blenheim. Then they had the satisfaction of seeing nearly 10,000 Frenchmen,

\* 21st.

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including the regiments of Navarre, du Roi and Languedoc, the proudest in Louis' army, march out under their eyes as prisoners of war.

The 16th had 31 officers and 632 men present at the battle. Included amongst the officers were the surgeon, surgeon's mate and one volunteer, and of these, 7 were killed and 13 wounded. Thus within six weeks the battalion had lost at the Schellenberg and at Blenheim 25 of its officers or 65 per cent. of its establishment, and we may assume that the losses of the rank and file were proportionate. The losses of The 16th in officers were in proportion to numbers only exceeded by those of The 23rd in Row's Brigade. That battalion lost 24 out of 33 present. The 21st also of Row's Brigade lost 23 out of 36 present, and The 26th of Ferguson's Brigade, 20 out of 40. The Regiment had, with the rest of Row's and Ferguson's Brigades, shown the astonished Frenchmen the capacity of the British infantry to stand punishment, and set for their successors a noble example of steadfastness under trial.

If the material results of Blenheim were great (Millner calls the prisoners " luggage that retarded their progress four or five days "), the moral results were even greater. For forty years French arms had triumphed on the battlefields of Europe, and an occasional reverse such as the loss of Namur had not shaken the military reputation of Louis' generals. Now his best troops had been overwhelmed, and the distress of the officers of the regiments which had surrendered in Blenheim when they moaned " Oh ! que dira le Roi ? que dira le Roi ? " foretold the effect of the news at Versailles and in Paris. Both were dumbfounded. The Empire had been saved ; the German States which had accepted French domination without question began to consider the advantages of a change of allegiance. A new military power was rising. If the number of British at Blenheim was small,

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some 10,000 out of an Allied force of 52,000, they had proved their quality, and above all, their great leader had astounded the military world by demonstrating that mobility in the field and resolution in battle could achieve more in a single campaign than could be accomplished by years of sieges, and of manœuvre round fortified lines.

The Franco-Bavarian forces fled from Blenheim to join Villeroi in Alsace, and Marlborough followed them to the Rhine, which he crossed at Philipsburg. There, joined by the remainder of Eugene's army from Stolhofen, he laid siege to Landau, The 16th forming part of the covering force. On that place falling on November 8th, they were shipped down the Rhine to Holland for a much needed rest, and they spent the winter of 1704-5 in quarters at Breda.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE WAR OF THE SPANISH SUCCESSION (CONTINUED)

As a result of the victory of Blenheim, the Allies were established west of the Rhine, and Marlborough proposed for the campaign of 1705 to exploit this success by an advance up the Moselle, designed to cut off the French forces in Alsace, while the Imperial Army simultaneously invaded that province. Leaving the Dutch troops under Auverquerque to watch the French in Brabant, he marched his British contingent from Maastricht, in the third week of April, rapidly through the Ardennes to the neighbourhood of Treves, where he had hoped to be joined by the German contingents. But Marlborough's allies, accustomed to the leisurely methods of the seventeenth century, had not learned to appreciate the value of time or the uses of mobility in war, and before he could act effectively in Lorraine, this dilatoriness allowed the French to take the initiative in Brabant, where Villeroi advanced down the Meuse, and after capturing Huy, laid siege to the citadel of Liége. The usual shriek of alarm from Holland followed, and Marlborough was obliged to abandon his campaign in Lorraine and march rapidly north. The Duke drove his infantry hard, and as The 18th were still in Ferguson's Brigade with The 16th, we may again turn to Millner for the experiences of the latter. He says of June 16th : "The Duke of Marlborough marched off towards Maastricht with great expedition as aforesaid, and continued our march all that night without any halt

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till the next day about noon ; for the quick despatch of our march, our army received meal in place of bread." The 135 miles from the borders of Lorraine to Duren were accomplished in nine days, the march running through the rough country of the Eastern Ardennes, which even with the roads of to-day would test the best infantry, as in fact they did during our march to the Rhine in 1918. It is therefore not surprising to learn from Captain Blackader of The 26th, also of Ferguson's brigade, that "many fell by the way with weariness, and some died."

The Duke's appearance at Duren scared Villeroi, who abandoned the siege of Liége and retired within his lines. Upon these lines, variously called the Lines of Brabant or the Lines of the Geete, the French had been at work for three years. They were eighty miles in extent and ran from the Meuse at Namur by Tirlemont along the Geete to Antwerp. The French engineers had used all their skill to improve the natural obstacles, and Villeroi's army which defended the lines was about equal in numbers to Marlborough's. A direct attack upon Villeroi's main body was therefore out of the question. But Villeroi's 70,000 men were not numerous enough to hold the whole extent of the lines in strength, and his method of defence was to keep outposts on the watch in them, while his main body moved behind them to wherever attack was threatened. Marlborough did not regard defensive lines with the awe which filled most of his contemporaries ; he had tested the marching powers of his men, and now designed to use those powers to outwit Villeroi. Having won the reluctant consent of his Dutch colleagues to his plan, with the promise that he would not assault the lines if he found them strongly held, he directed Auverquerque, who was covering on the Mehaigne the siege of Huy, begun by the Allies on Villeroi's withdrawal, to advance against the part of the

lines opposite to him. This was the weakest portion on the whole eighty miles, and Villeroi at once moved his main body to defend it. On learning of this, Marlborough, who lay some ten miles to the north of Auverquerque, broke camp at tattoo on July 17th, and marching rapidly northwards by night, was at dawn opposite to the lines near Tirlemont. An infantry advanced guard in which were two battalions of The Royal Scots led the way, and was followed by the cavalry, while Ferguson's Brigade led the main body of the infantry. The French force about Tirlemont, consisting of three battalions and a few squadrons, was surprised. The vanguard quickly rushed the line and prepared crossings for the cavalry, which drove off such of the enemy reinforcements as attempted to stand ; then on the arrival of the main body, Ferguson's brigade captured Tirlemont, taking some 500 prisoners. So these formidable defences were taken with trifling loss, the trophies including a number of colours, twelve guns and about 1,400 prisoners.

The importance of the forcing of the lines of Brabant has been minimised because circumstances prevented the Duke from following up his success and bringing Villeroi to battle, and because it was achieved with little fighting. But at the time it created a sensation. Defensive lines were regarded with an almost superstitious dread, and were, it was held, only to be overcome by the slow and painful processes of siege warfare. Marlborough had proved that skill, daring, mobility and surprise were more effective than approach by sap, and he was delighted with his achievement. Orkney wrote : " I believe this pleases him as much as Hogstet (*i.e.*, Blenheim) did," and that this was so, witness the fact that when after the war the Duke ordered a set of tapestries commemorating his victories to be woven for his palace of Blenheim, where they may now be seen, he gave the forcing of the lines of Brabant a place alongside Blenheim. That his

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men agreed with him is shown by Millner's description of the operation as a "great and glorious victory."

Villeroi retired behind the Dyle, and there again Marlborough outwitted him. Distracting his opponent's attention by feints, the Duke marched on the night of July 29th-30th in two columns towards the French right, Orkney with Ferguson's brigade forming one of the advanced guards. The French outposts were surprised. Pontoons or, as Millner calls them, "tin boats" were successfully laid for the guns, Ferguson's infantry waded across, beat back the French infantry and enabled a battery of sixteen guns to be established on the far side. The enemy was caught at a disadvantage, but the Dutch generals refused to fight, and Marlborough, to his disgust, was compelled to withdraw.

Moving south, he turned the line of the Dyle, and again was in a position to bring Villeroi to battle, when again the Dutch generals refused to co-operate, and the campaign ended without any decisive action. If there had been little hard fighting, the campaign was a hard one for the infantry, of whom Marlborough had asked much and had not been disappointed. Millner computes the distance covered by Ferguson's Brigade in sixty-two marching days at 684 miles. After this strenuous marching, The 16th went into winter quarters in November 1705 at Goraim. In the previous May, the Earl of Derby had resigned the Colonelcy of the Regiment, and the Queen had conferred it upon Colonel Godfrey of the Foot Guards.

In view of the disappointments of 1705, the Duke designed to leave his difficult Dutch colleagues to themselves and to join Eugene in Italy, but neither his Allies nor his Government were prepared to countenance a measure which would in their opinion leave their vitals exposed to French enterprise, and he had perforce to turn his mind to another campaign in Flanders. The most

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recalcitrant of the Dutch generals had been removed, and the others swore repentance, so he was to that extent in better case than in the previous year. Villeroi was firmly established behind the Dyle, and the problem was how to bring him to battle. In the first week of May 1706, Marlborough assembled his army about Bilsen, a dozen miles west of Maastricht, and marched them rapidly on Namur in the hope either of surprising the garrison of that fortress or of bringing Villeroi to its defence. To his satisfaction the Duke learned on May 22nd that the French had left their lines and were moving towards Namur, and he marched promptly to anticipate them on the high ground about Ramillies, which lies between the source of the Little Geete and the Mehaigne. Riding forward to reconnoitre on May 23rd, Marlborough found the whole French army moving into position to occupy the very ground towards which he was marching. The two armies were of approximately equal strength, each being about 60,000 strong, but Marlborough had a more numerous artillery. Confident in himself and in his men, the Duke decided to attack at once, despite the fact that the French had the advantage of position.

The right of this position was on the Mehaigne at the village of Tavières, and the French line ran thence across the ridge between the Mehaigne and the Little Geete to Ramillies, this ridge being the key to the position. From Ramillies the French line was covered by the marshes of the Little Geete, and extended through Offuz to Outre-Eglise. The Duke's plan of battle was similar to that of Blenheim, in that he proposed first to draw the enemy's attention to the flanks, and then to assault and break the centre. His army was drawn up with the British infantry under Orkney on the right, supported by the Danes, while the Germans and Dutch formed the centre and left, the main body of the cavalry being on the left centre.

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The battle was begun by the Dutch of Marlborough's left, who attacked and stormed Tavières. Then on the right, Orkney with the bulk of the British infantry, waded across the marshes of the Little Geete and attacked Offuz.\* As Marlborough had hoped, Villeroi promptly weakened his centre to support his left. Marlborough thereupon ordered Orkney to suspend his attack, on the grounds that he could not get cavalry across the Little Geete to support him, and while the German infantry advanced to attack Ramillies, he launched his cavalry against the ridge south of that village. The cavalry attack, at first successful, was repulsed by a determined French counter-charge. Marlborough was, as usual, at the point of danger ; he brought up fresh squadrons, ordered some of Orkney's infantry up to support the attack on Ramillies, and while these measures rallied his centre, the Duke of Würtemburg, finding an opening at Tavières, swept round and turned the French left, and this movement decided the issue of the battle. For once the British infantry had had a comparatively easy task, for Ramillies had fallen by the time when they came up from the left, but the Duke drove them hard in the pursuit, and they followed the flying enemy all night to find themselves next morning fifteen miles from the battlefield, and on May 25th, in Louvain.

The vigour of the pursuit produced great results. The French abandoned Brussels, Ghent and Bruges fell, and Dendermonde was only saved because the governor used the same expedient as did the Belgian Army in 1914, and opened the sluices. Antwerp surrendered on June 17th, Ostend on July 6th, and on August 22nd, Menin, which was regarded as one of Vauban's masterpieces, was captured after a month's siege. So in a single campaign, Marlborough had cleared the whole of Brabant

\* The 16th was brigaded at Ramillies with The 1st, 1st Guards, The 21st and 26th.

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and opened the way for the invasion of France. This brilliant prospect was, however, not to be realised.

In 1707 as in 1705, Marlborough found all his efforts frustrated by the hesitations of his Allies, and unseasonable weather. The 16th, like the remainder of the British infantry, spent a good part of the campaigning seasons tramping to and fro through Flanders mud, and returned to winter quarters in Ghent, having achieved nothing. We may turn to Millner for a specimen of the marches of that wet summer. “August 3 (13). We decamp’d our army from Nivelle about eight in the morning, and marched in a very great rain and deep road to, and pitched camp at Soignies, five leagues ; and the same day by the heaviness of the rain and tediousness of the deep watery road, to speak within bounds, the quarter of our foot scarce got up with their colours till the next day about noon, and then all got up.”

In the spring of 1708, Louis XIV. attempted a diversion and embarked a dozen French battalions from Dunkirk for the invasion of Scotland. Marlborough had early warning of the scheme, and sending ten of his battalions from their winter quarters in Bruges and Ghent, amongst them The 16th, embarked them at Ostend. “About the 1st of March,” says Millner, “the usurping King of France, infused of mischief, caused a great fleet to be assembled at Dunkirk, and twelve battalions and several detached troops, with the pretended Prince of Wales on board thereof, with his project in design to make an invasion upon Scotland, yea England and Ireland also, towards which they then accordingly sailed ; but was suddenly intercepted by our Queen and Council’s good care who having timely intelligence thereof ordered and sent out Admiral Byng, with thirty-three war-ships, immediately to await their motion ; Admiral Baker with twelve thereof, at the same time sailed to Ostend, in order to take in and convoy from thence Major-General Sabine

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and ten battalions of our English foot, most readiest, who then were assembled from Ghent and Bruges at Ostend, on the 15th day of March and the same day embarked in the said fleet and some transports, who all on the 17th set sail from Ostend after the Pretender towards Scotland, in order to stop his and the French career, and to frustrate their landing there or anywhere else within the said Dominions. The 20th ditto our fleet arrived near unto Tynmouth Castle and near unto Shieles ; where on the 21st ditto, in the morning all our transports went in and cast anchor in the Harbour, and there to abide till called for ; but the war-ships with those on board thereof, in order to join Admiral Byng or otherwise, sailed on in pursuit of the enemy to the south of Leith ; when the enemy, finding no opportunity nor encouragement for landing, sailed from thence round the northern part of Scotland, where they all along retained likewise a great fear to put their project in execution, so that they could find no safe opportunity or inlet for landing and therefore they only plundered some of the northern parts thereof, where there was no power to resist them, and after having so done, they instantly sailed back to Dunkirk, to avoid our fleet that was in pursuit thereof ; many had for their pains only a view round England, Scotland and Ireland, with their loss of the Saulsbury prize, taken by our fleet on the Firth of Leith, as she was about making her escape under cover of the English colours ; in which there was taken several noted persons of distinction ; after which the enemy being resailed to Dunkirk, and elsewhere in France, our fleet also resailed, those with Admiral Baker to Shieles, from which on the 16th April, they with the aforesaid transport, set sail, and resailed towards Ostend, where all on the 19th ditto, arrived safe at anchor. This was a round of 16 days sailing accounted about 300 leagues and 900 miles English." This trip to England and back in hastily collected transports was

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anything but a joy ride for the troops, for the North Sea was evidently far from kind. Deane of the 1st Guards wrote of the journey, "continued destruction was in the foretop, the plague between decks, hell in the forecastle, and the Devil at the helm." But this abortive enterprise had one good result in that it roused England to fresh determination to prosecute the war, and in the election of 1708, a strong Whig majority was returned, pledged to that policy.

Their defeat at Ramillies and the approach of Marlborough's army to their frontiers had roused the French to energetic measures of defence. Their forces on the frontier of the Spanish Netherlands were reinforced by the withdrawal of their troops from Italy, and Vendôme, a far more enterprising general than Villeroi, assumed command. When The 16th returned at the beginning of May 1708 to Ghent, Vendôme was in the act of concentrating his forces about Mons. He advanced thence at the end of the month as if to turn the Duke's flank at Louvain, but Marlborough countered this by a rapid concentration on his left, which again took a heavy toll of the infantry, for Deane describes the march as "very tedious with wet and dirt and extraordinary great rains so that it was thought full as bad as the march last year between Nivelle and Soignes." Having drawn the Duke westwards, Vendôme finding no favourable opportunity in the neighbourhood of Louvain, moved rapidly to his left. He had bribed the authorities of Bruges and Ghent, and these places opened their gates when he appeared before them, the small garrisons left by Marlborough being compelled to surrender in the first week in July. Vendôme then advanced against Oudenaarde to complete his control of the Middle Scheldt. Marlborough, who had summoned Eugene's army which was on the Moselle to his aid, on hearing of the fall of Bruges and Ghent, crossed the Dender and marched for

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Oudenarde. The move to and across the Dender was, as usual, made, Millner tells us, "in great expedition without any halt, round toward Oudenarde, till the next morning we arrived at Ath, where we halted a little on our arms, to bring up our long rear, after which we proceeded with our march there, and about noon pitched camp between Lessines and Hisberg villages ; a round and wonderful swift march of ten leagues, in order for battle to prevent the French of Oudenarde."

Marlborough's advance was indeed too rapid to allow of Eugene's joining him in time for battle, but the Prince himself had hurried forward ahead of his troops. On the morning of July 11th, Cadogan reached Oudenarde with a strong advanced guard to find the French advanced guard arriving on the heights opposite. The result was that rare event in those days, an encounter battle, and as is usual in such battles, greater boldness, promptitude and skill decided the issue. It required some courage to cross a big river and attack an enemy, stronger by some 12,000 men, who had the advantage of ground, but the Duke did not hesitate while the French commanders disputed. Cadogan's advanced guard laid pontoons across the Scheldt east of Oudenarde, and drove back a body of Swiss infantry. Vendôme rightly wished to attack before the main body of the Allies could cross, but his colleague the Duke of Burgundy wished to take position on the heights north-east of Oudenarde, and disagreement brought hesitation and delay, of which Marlborough took immediate advantage. Arriving at the head of the main body, he sent his cavalry through the town to turn the French left ; directed Cadogan to press forward so as to prevent the enemy from debouching from the woods and enclosed fields on the slopes above the river into the open valley, and supported him promptly with the leading infantry of the main body, consisting of twenty battalions under the Duke of Argyle.

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Amongst these twenty were The 16th. Argyle's men were heavily counter-attacked by the French, but held their own. Finding that his centre was secure, and that Eugene on Cadogan's right was not being pressed, Marlborough moved his infantry' reserve to support his cavalry which, under Auverquerque, was working round the enemy left. The French, occupied with Eugene, Cadogan and Argyle, failed to discover this movement till the cavalry had rolled up their flank and, promptly supported by Marlborough's infantry, brought confusion and disorder into the enemy's ranks. Indeed, only darkness saved Vendôme from complete disaster. "If," wrote the Duke to his Duchess, "we had been so happy as to have had two hours more of daylight, I believe we should have made an end of the war."

The victory gave the Allies the line of the Lys, and Marlborough was minded to follow this by an advance into the heart of France, leaving the French fortresses to themselves. But even Eugene could not be brought to agree to so daring a breach of the military canons of the day, and as a compromise it was agreed that Lille should be besieged. This was a sufficiently bold enterprise. Lille, the most important town of Northern France, was strongly fortified and its numerous garrison was commanded by Marshall Boufflers, while the French had two armies in the field, one under Berwick about Mons, the other, that defeated at Oudenarde, was behind the Scheldt near Ghent. The siege train from Brussels, escorted by Eugene's troops from the Moselle, had to be brought up between these two hostile armies, and as soon as it was within reach, Marlborough moved a force of forty-four squadrons and thirty battalions under the Prince of Orange, to begin the investment of Lille. With this force was The 16th, and it was the gallantry of Sergeant Littler of the Regiment which enabled the Prince to secure on August 11th one of the chief outworks,

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Marquette Abbey, by surprise. "Sergeant Littler in Godfrey's regiment," says Millner, "swam over the river, and let down the bridge for the passage of the troops ; and a party thereof immediately passed over and secured the said pass, which the enemy attempted to repossess but came short, for which singular piece of service Sergeant Littler had colours bestowed on him in the Duke of Argyle's regiment." \*

After this preliminary, Marlborough entrusted the prosecution of the siege to Eugene, whom he reinforced with a strong contingent of his own army, which included The 16th, 18th, 21st, 23rd and 24th Foot. Marlborough with the remainder of his army, formed the covering force against the armies of Vendôme and Berwick, which had united near Grammont on August 30th. The siege went slowly ; the first batteries had been sited too far from the works, and this involved a great expenditure of ammunition. An attempt by the French to intercept an important convoy of ammunition was fortunately defeated by General Webb at Wynendael on September 28th, and the batteries being established nearer the main works, a practicable breach was effected by October 22nd, when Boufflers beat a parley, and abandoning the town, retired to the citadel. But the reduction of the citadel was a serious task, and it was another seven weeks, during which all Marlborough's skill was required to keep Vendôme at a distance, before, on December 9th,

\* Lieut.-General Sir William Hamilton in his "History of the Grenadier Guards," claims Littler as of the 1st Guards, and says he was given a commission in that regiment, while Fortescue (Vol. I., p. 505) appears to concur in that ascription, but a reference to the *Gazette* corroborates Millner entirely, and, while accounting for General Hamilton's mistake, puts the matter beyond doubt. Sergeant W. Littler, of Godfrey's Regiment was given in 1709 a commission in The Buffs (The Duke of Argyle's Regiment) for conspicuous gallantry, and this is the only recorded instance of a commission from the ranks being awarded for gallantry during Marlborough's wars. On December 20th, 1726, he was commissioned as Lieut.-Captain in the 1st Foot Guards and on December 27th, 1738, was promoted Captain and Lieut.-Colonel in that regiment. *Vide* Dalton's "Army Lists (Commission Registers)," Vol. VI., p. 68.

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Boufflers surrendered. The siege had lasted seventeen weeks, and had cost the Allies 15,000 casualties, and of those the British losses accounted, Millner says, for 404 killed and 1,136 wounded, or more than 50 per cent. of the strength of the five battalions which had been engaged throughout the siege. Deane wrote : " This murdering siege has destroyed more than Namur did last war and those that were the flower of the Army, for what was not killed or wounded was spoiled by their hellish invention of throwing bombs, boiling pitch, tar, oil and brimstone, with scalding water and such like combustibles from the outworks, and when our men made any attack. Likewise many other inventions enough to puzzle the Devil to contrive."

As Deane says, the capture of Lille was a much more formidable task than that of Namur, the siege took longer, the losses were heavier and the results greater. Namur was, presumably, made a battle honour as marking the one British success in the War of the League of Augsburg, but this granted, it appears illogical to deny such a distinction to the greater achievement—Lille. The capture of that great fortress was immediately followed by the siege of Ghent, which surrendered on January 2nd, 1709, and Bruges was at once evacuated by the French. Thus Marlborough recovered everything that had been lost in Brabant through Vendôme's activities at the beginning of the campaign, and had again opened the door for the invasion of France.

The resumption of military operations in 1709 was delayed by the opening of negotiations for peace. But the demands of the Allies proved to be too stiff for France to accept, and Louis roused his country to a fresh effort. The French Army was reinforced, and Marshal Villars, the ablest of its generals, was sent to confront Marlborough and Eugene. In May 1709, the French lines in Flanders ran over ground which became very familiar to the

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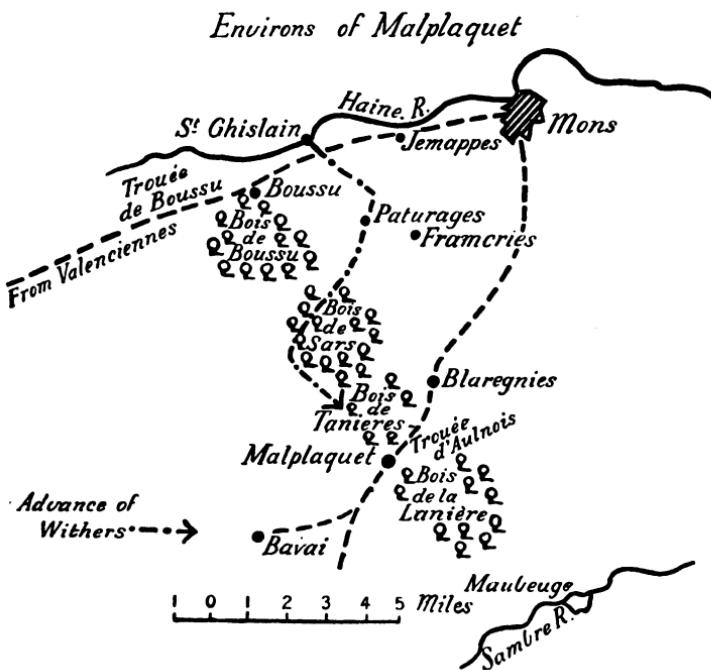
British Army from October 1914 to the end of the Great War. Villars' left rested on the Lys near Estaires, and passed by Hinges and Béthune to Cuinchy, whence it crossed the battlefield of Loos and ran east of Vimy Ridge to the Deule Canal near Douai. In front of this line the French still held the fortresses of Tournai and Mons, and Marlborough's immediate object was to reduce these two fortresses, so that he might be free to manœuvre Villars out of his lines, as he had, in 1705, manœuvred Villeroi out of the lines of Brabant.

Early in June, Marlborough, assembling his army, which numbered about 120,000 men, near Menin, moved to the neighbourhood of Lille and advanced thence as if to attack Villars' lines. The French commander drew troops from Tournai and his other northern fortresses to reinforce his army. Then suddenly changing direction, the Duke by a rapid night march appeared before Tournai at dawn on June 28th, and at once began the siege of that place. During the operations against the works defending the town, The 16th were in the covering force, but after the chief outworks had been carried by assault on July 26th, the governor surrendered the town and withdrew to the citadel. The 16th, brigaded with The 8th, 10th, and 15th Foot,\* were then employed in the attack on the citadel, which proved to be an arduous task. Tournai was famous for its underground works, and every advance had to be by sap, mine and counter-mine, and fighting in subterranean galleries tried the besiegers highly. An account from the trenches which appeared in the *Daily Courant* of August 20th, gives a graphic picture of this struggle: "Now as to our fighting underground, blowing up like kites in the air, not being sure of a foot of ground we stand on while in the trenches. Our miners and the enemy very often meet each other when they have combats till one side

\* Joined towards the end of the siege by The 18th.

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gives way. We have got into three or four of the enemy's great galleries, which are thirty or forty feet underground, and lead to several of their chambers ; and in these we fight in armour by lanthorn and candle, they disputing every inch of the gallery with us to hinder our finding out their great mines. Yesternight we found one which was



placed just under our bomb batteries, in which were eighteen hundred weight of powder besides many bombs, and if we had not been so lucky as to find it, in a very few hours our batteries and some hundreds of men had taken flight in the air.” \*

The citadel surrendered on September 3rd, the survivors

\* Quoted by Fortescue, Vol. I., p. 514.

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who marched out as prisoners of war numbering, Millner tells us, 3,635. The siege had cost the Allies over 3,000 casualties ; of these more than 2,000 were due to the attack on the citadel. The very day that the citadel fell, Marlborough, starting as usual at tattoo, marched the bulk of his army for Mons, leaving the troops, who had been employed in the siege of the citadel under Withers, to complete the surrender. Villars, alive to the danger, at once advanced to the relief of the place. In 1709 the country west and south-west of Mons was densely wooded. To-day the northern portion of those woods has given place to the medley of mines and mining villages round Jemappes, Paturage and Frameries, in which our 2nd Corps fought on August 23rd, 1914 ; of the southern portion, through which runs the road from Mons by Blaregnies and Malplaquet to Bavai, the road by which on August 24th, 1914, the left of our 1st Corps retreated, there are still many traces. Through these woods there were in 1709, two gaps leading from Douai to Mons, the northern at the Trouée de Boussu, west of Jemappes, through which runs the Valenciennes-Mons road, the southern at the Trouée d'Aulnois, just north of Malplaquet. Villars, aiming at the Trouée d'Aulnois, feinted at the northern gap, but Marlborough discovered his enemy's intention in time, and marched to close the southern gap. There on the field of Malplaquet the two armies faced each other on the afternoon of September 9th.

Marlborough has been much criticised for not attacking at once, and delay certainly gave Villars time to strengthen an already strong position. There were two excellent reasons for not fighting on the 9th, the first being that the artillery, delayed by bad roads, was not up, the second, that the infantry was wearied by the strenuous marches in vile weather from Tournai. Millner says of those marches, "for the space of nine days following, our army continued in a constant motion, without ever a

day's halt." On the 10th when the guns arrived, twenty-one battalions and four squadrons from Tournai under Withers, amongst them, almost certainly, The 16th, were within reach, and Marlborough decided to wait for them.

This reinforcement played, as we shall see, a vital part in Marlborough's plan; indeed, it is reasonable to suppose that its position on the 10th, which enabled the Duke to bring it up through the woods against the enemy's left flank the next day, was the factor which decided him to attack Villars. Had Marlborough fought at Malplaquet without Withers and been defeated, criticism would certainly have been louder and more just.

Villars had taken full advantage of the delay to strengthen his position. On the left of the Trouée d'Aulnois, he had a series of strong outworks constructed in the Bois des Tanières, while further back the Trouée itself was defended by a double line of trenches, the right resting on the Forest of la Lanière. Batteries were placed on both flanks to enfilade the gap. Before the main lines of trenches defending the gap could be assaulted with effect, it was necessary to carry the outworks in the Bois des Tanières. Marlborough's plan was that 40 battalions mainly of German troops under General Schulemburg should attack the outworks from the north-east, while 28 battalions under Count Lottum assaulted them from the east. While this attack was going on, 15 British battalions under Lord Orkney were to demonstrate against the centre of the French main line, and 31 battalions, mainly Dutch under the Prince of Orange, were to perform a similar office against the French right. Each attack was to be supported by cavalry.

Marlborough timed Withers' advance through the Bois de Sars to come down on the left of the French main line at the same time as Schulemburg and Lottum had driven

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the French from the advanced works, while the advance of Orkney and Orange against the main position was to take place as soon as Withers had made himself felt.

About nine on the morning of September 11th, Schulemberg and Lottum began the attack after a preliminary bombardment, but both met with a stout resistance, and Orkney seeing this, detached two of his battalions, the 1st Guards and The Royal Scots, to reinforce Lottum, and with this reinforcement the outworks were carried. Just at the right moment Withers' appeared through the Bois de Sars, outflanking the French left. All was going according to Marlborough's plans until the Prince of Orange, impatient of the waiting *rôle* which had been assigned to him, launched a premature attack against the French right front, which was repulsed with very heavy loss to the Dutch. This premature attack brought Orkney forward against the centre sooner than Marlborough had intended, and caused his British infantry unnecessary loss. But the effect of Withers' turning movement was decisive in that it enabled Schulemberg and Lottum to drive back the French left, and finally Orkney to break their centre. By three o'clock in the afternoon the French were in retreat. Owing to Orange's lack of judgment, the Allied losses were very heavy, numbering nearly 20,000, while those of the French are said not to have exceeded 12,000, but of the Allied losses, 8,700 were suffered by the Dutch, or about 45 per cent. of the whole. The British losses were comparatively light, and were about 1,800, of which 1,600 were suffered by the 20 battalions of infantry.\*

The slaughter of Malplaquet was used to Marlborough's detriment by his political opponents, and ridiculously exaggerated accounts of the British losses were put in

\* The casualty list given by Millner agrees nearly with that attached to a letter from Mr. Cardonell of September 26th, 1709, published in the War Office Report on Regimental Honours, and may be taken as approximately correct.

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circulation.\* The losses would have been far less and the results greater if Marlborough's plans had been followed by the Prince of Orange, and the battle is chiefly remarkable for the Duke's novel conception which brought Withers' force to the battlefield against the enemy's flank at exactly the right time, thus anticipating the manœuvres which decided the issue at Waterloo and Koeniggrätz. There can be, I think, little doubt but that Withers' unexpected appearance on the French flank decided the issue of the battle, and in that decisive action The 16th, I believe, took part. There is the difficulty common to all Marlborough's battles of determining the order of battle and the action of the different regiments. Dumont's order of battle which Fortescue follows is clearly unsatisfactory. It shows the 18th Royal Irish on the left of the British line, while it is clear from Parker and Millner that they were with Withers on the British right, while, as Fortescue notes, this order of battle finds no place for The 15th and 19th, which were certainly present. Fortescue makes Orkney detach The Buffs, 16th and Temple's battalions to assist Lottum, but, as Atkinson points out, Orkney's own account, which says he detached the 1st Guards and his own Regiment The Royal Scots, is decisive of this. It seems to me that as in the case of Blenheim, the best guide to the order of battle is to compare the casualty list with the story of the battle. There were 20 British battalions engaged, and their losses in officers are said by Millner to have been 118, which agrees nearly with Cardonell's list. The average loss in officers was therefore 6 per battalion. Fifteen British battalions were with Orkney, and of these several were exposed to the

\* For an example of this exaggeration, see Thackeray's " Esmond " : " Every village and family in England was deplored the death of beloved sons and fathers. We dared not speak to each other even at table of Malplaquet so fearful were the gaps left in our army by the cannon of that bloody action." The average strength of a battalion may be taken as 600, and the average loss per battalion was 80. At Blenheim the average loss per battalion was 140.

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enemy's preliminary bombardment, two were detached to assist Lottum, and the remainder took part in a frontal attack on the enemy's main line. Now of the battalions which are known to have been with Orkney, and in which the officer casualties are ascertainable, The Buffs lost 6 killed and 9 wounded, the 21st 4 killed and 5 wounded, the 23rd 3 killed and 7 wounded, the 26th 3 killed and 5 wounded, while the 1st Guards and the Coldstreams are known to have lost heavily. In all these battalions the losses were above the average. On the other hand, one would expect that the losses of Withers' battalions would be smaller, since his attack came as a surprise against the enemy's flank, and his advance through the woods was not exposed to artillery fire. Withers' force consisted of the battalions brought up from the siege of Tournai, with a few squadrons, and amongst these were five British battalions. It is natural to suppose that these battalions were those which had taken part in the final stages of the reduction of the citadel. Marlborough, in a letter to the Duc de Moles, written from the field of Malplaquet, calls Withers' force "*la réserve des troupes qui ont fait la siège, que nous avons été obligés de laisser derrière jusqu'à l'évacuation de la citadelle.*" \* The troops which were engaged in the final attacks on the citadel, having nearly 4,000 prisoners to dispose of, could not have marched off on the night of the day on which the citadel surrendered. One would therefore expect to find the five British battalions which were engaged in the siege, The 8th, 10th, 15th, 16th and 18th, with Withers. When we find that losses in officers in those battalions were considerably below the average losses at Malplaquet, it seems reasonably certain that these were the five British battalions which helped to decide the issue of Malplaquet. Their losses in officers were 8th, one ; 10th, two ; 15th, one ; 16th, three ; and 18th, two.

\* "Marlborough's Despatches," Vol. V., p. 593.

## THE WAR OF THE SPANISH SUCCESSION

After resting on the field of Malplaquet, the Allies returned to the siege of Mons, which capitulated on October 9th. It was then too late to continue operations, and Marlborough sent his troops to winter quarters, The 16th going back to Ghent.

Marlborough had his army concentrated about Tournai by the middle of 1710 several weeks before Villars had expected him to begin operations, and adopting his usual expedient of a rapid night march, he appeared at dawn on April 21st before Villars' lines of La Bassée, and passing through these formidable defences, he arrived before Douai the next day. Douai proved a hard nut to crack. It did not capitulate until June 26th, and the siege cost the Allies over 8,000 casualties. The 16th were throughout the siege in the covering force, and during the latter part of May and the whole of June, were constantly on the move, engaged in thwarting Villars' attempts to raise the siege. After the capture of Douai, the Duke moved the covering army across the Vimy ridge, and advanced to and invested Béthune on July 15th, which surrendered on August 28th. Villars was busily engaged on the construction of the famous lines which became known as the "non plus ultra," designed to protect France from the invasion with which Marlborough now constantly threatened her. This line extended from the mouth of the Canchet Étaples and ran thence in front of Montreuil, where British G.H.Q. was established from December 1915 to the end of the Great War. From Montreuil the lines followed the valley of the Canche by Hesdin and Frévent, ran thence by Arras, Bouchain and Valenciennes to Charleroi, and along the Sambre to Namur. A formidable barrier was thus formed, stretching from the Channel to the Meuse. In view of the agitation at home which followed the Battle of Malplaquet and the growth of political opposition in England, Marlborough felt himself compelled to proceed cautiously,

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and after the capture of Béthune, he proceeded to reduce the fortresses of St. Venant and Aire, both sieges being conducted simultaneously. The 16th were again in the covering force, being posted at Lillers. St. Venant fell on September 29th, but Aire held out till November 8th, and with its fall the campaign ended, and The 16th went back once more to Ghent for the winter.

Early in 1711, General Godfrey retired from the service, and the Queen conferred the Colonelcy of The 16th upon Brig.-General Henry Durell of the Guards. Marlborough's object in reducing the fortresses of Flanders in the previous year had been to get room for manœuvre against the non plus ultra lines. Just as he was assembling his army, the news arrived of the death of the Emperor, Joseph I., which involved the recall of Eugene to Austria, and this left the Duke actually weaker than Villars. But Marlborough's faith in the power of mobility to overcome entrenchments was unshaken, and on the very day that Eugene left him, he set his army in motion from the neighbourhood of Douai, and on June 13th, after a march of eighteen miles in such heat that many men "fainted and dropped down dead on the road," \* arrived on the northern slopes of the Vimy Ridge. This was a specimen of the labours of the infantry in a campaign in which the Duke used the legs of his men to overcome his opponent as definitely and even more skilfully than ever did Napoleon. Having in a series of brilliant manœuvres so persuaded Villars that he was about to assault his lines between Arras and Hesdin, that the French general drew off troops from his right to reinforce his centre, the Duke started early on the night of August 4th on a night march, and the next day his main body was through the lines near Arleux, forty miles away. The infantry had covered this distance in eighteen hours, as fine a feat of marching as the records of war disclose;

\* Millner, p. 317.

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and the result was, as Bolingbroke wrote to the Duke, to obtain "without losing a man, such an advantage as we should have thought with the loss of several thousand lives and have reckoned ourselves gainers." Having pierced the non plus ultra lines, the Duke laid siege and captured Bouchain, which surrendered on September 14th. Operations were then interrupted by the opening of peace negotiations, and the troops were sent into winter quarters.

The negotiations dragged on throughout the winter, and the army once more concentrated near Tournai in April 1712, but no longer under the great leader. The elections of 1710 had endorsed Anne's action in dismissing the Whigs, and the new Tory Government was set upon peace and the downfall of Marlborough. The latter came first, and on January 1st the Duke was dismissed and the command in Flanders was given to Lord Ormonde, who began to besiege Le Quesnoy on June 8th, The 16th in the covering force being stationed at Le Cateau, where British Headquarters were first established in August 1914. Le Quesnoy fell on July 4th, and this event was followed by the declaration of an armistice. As part of the terms of the armistice, Dunkirk was surrendered by the French, pending the conclusion of peace, and The 16th marched into that town to remain in garrison there until April 1714, being engaged in demolishing the defences of that place, under the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht between France and England, which was signed on April 11th, 1713. In the first twenty-five years of its life, The 16th had been on active service for twenty years, during that period it had fought gallantly in seven battles, and numerous minor actions, and had taken part in no fewer than seventeen sieges. Of the regiments which had landed in Holland with The 16th in 1689, only The Buffs, The Royal Scots and 21st (Royal Scots Fusiliers) were on active service for a like period. All of them took part in

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all the great battles of the two wars, but of these three, only The Royal Scots was present at the fall of Namur, and only The 21st at the fall of Lille ; none of them was at the fall of Tournai. The 16th, as we have seen, was prominently engaged at each of these sieges, the most important during the wars of William and Marlborough. Its record of continuous active service is therefore unique in the history of the British Army.

## CHAPTER IV

### FROM MARLBOROUGH'S WARS TO THE PEACE OF AMIENS

THE 16th being part of the Army of Occupation in Flanders, escaped the drastic reduction in the Army which followed the Treaty of Utrecht. While it was in garrison in Dunkirk, the Colonel of the Regiment, General Durell, who commanded the garrison, died, and was succeeded by Brig.-General Hans Hamilton. By the time when the demolition of the defences of Dunkirk was completed the rumblings of rebellion in Scotland were beginning to cause anxiety to the Government, and, in April 1714, the Regiment was embarked for Scotland and was landed at Leith, whence it marched to Stirling, the gate of the Highlands, and, while it was there, Viscount Irving became its colonel in succession to Hamilton.

On September 6th, 1715, the Earl of Mar raised the standard of revolt at Braemar, and gathered the Highland clans. The establishment of The 16th was raised to twelve companies, it moved into the Highlands to hold Fort William, and it was in charge of that important outpost when the Duke of Argyle checked the Highlanders at Sheriff Muir, and the attempted invasion of England collapsed at Preston. The Regiment was then employed in the unpleasant task of disarming the Highlanders and arresting the leaders, and was still so occupied when it was called, in 1718, to what looked like being a more serious task.

In 1717 the political control of Spain was in the hands of a clever Italian, Cardinal Alberoni, who espoused the

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cause of the Stuarts and induced Charles XII. of Sweden to join him. With the collapse of the Highland rising, the establishment of the army had been reduced, and the Government in a panic borrowed 6,000 foreign soldiers from the Netherlands. The danger of invasion was checked by the defeat of the Spanish fleet off Cape Passaro in 1718. The pursuit after Passaro was entrusted to Captain Walton, who reported its results to Admiral Byng in a letter which contained the words so often quoted : " We have taken and destroyed all the Spanish ships which were upon the coast, number as per margin." Alberoni, however, gathered another fleet and embarked an expedition for Scotland. Storms in the Bay of Biscay dispersed the Spaniards, and only two cruisers arrived off the coast of Ross-shire, where a few hundred men were landed. No general rising of the clans took place, and a force from Inverness easily dispersed the invaders before The 16th from Fort William could reach the valley of Galashiell, in which the action was fought. The pacification of the Highlands dawdled on without system until General Wade assumed command. Wade, anticipating Sherman's famous dictum " transportation is civilisation," a policy which in recent years we have been applying to the North-West Frontier of India, began to open up the country by the construction of roads, a work commemorated by the well-known bull :

" If you'd seen these roads before they were made  
You'd hold up your hands and bless General Wade."

Wade knew The 16th well, for he had served in The 10th alongside them in the wars of William and Marlborough. He affectionately termed his roadmakers " my highway-men," and the work was popular with the men, who earned sixpence a day extra duty pay. So we may imagine The 16th happily employed upon the construction of part of the road from Fort William to Inverness, which

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remained the means of communication until in the last few years it was replaced by a modern motor road. From this work the Regiment was called back south in 1727. Meantime the colonelcy had passed from Viscount Irving to Colonel Cholmely in 1717, and from Cholmely to the Earl of Deloraine in 1724.\*

The cause of the Regiment's move from Scotland was further trouble with Spain. In 1726, Spain again formed a coalition against Great Britain and France, which country, then under Louis XV., was disposed to make common cause with us. Spain began a desultory siege of Gibraltar, but the British fleets prevented most of the treasure ships from South America, which provided Spain with the sinews of war, from crossing the Atlantic, and without money Spain could not find men and ships. Great Britain had persuaded Holland to join with her once more, and in 1727 The 16th was ordered to embark to join the Dutch, when Spain patched up a peace.

This peace was certainly a patch-work, for in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, events were tending to make Spain as much the natural enemy of England as she had been in the days of Elizabeth. British trade with the East was still in its infancy, and the cry of British merchants continued to be "Westward Ho!" Under the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht, an agreement had been reached with Spain, termed the Assiento, by which we were permitted to import slaves into South America, and to send one ship a year for ordinary commerce into the Spanish Main. The opportunities so afforded were used by British merchants to carry on a very profitable smuggling, which was a constant source of friction, for Spain in defence claimed to exercise the right to search

\* Numbers were not officially adopted for regiments until 1782. Till then regiments appear in the records under the name of their colonels. The succession of colonels is therefore of importance. Lord Deloraine was transferred to The 7th Horse in 1730 and Colonel Roger Handasyd succeeded him.

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British ships for contraband. When a Spanish customs officer cut off the ear of a British merchant captain named Jenkins, and Jenkins appeared to tell of his grievances at the Bar of the House of Commons, popular fury swept Walpole reluctantly, for he knew how ill-equipped the nation was, into war with Spain in 1739.

The story of the “war of Jenkins’ ear” is a melancholy page of our history. Walpole’s policy had been peace and retrenchment as a means of recovery from the financial fever of the South Sea Bubble. Army and Navy had been cut down, and the establishment of The 16th, like that of other regiments, had been heavily reduced. Now it was suddenly raised, and the Regiment was filled up with raw boys and with the sweepings of the gaols. The war began with an attack by our West Indian squadron under Admiral Vernon upon Porto Bello, a treaty port under the Assiento on the coast of Panama. Vernon succeeded in destroying the defences of Porto Bello, and the British public greeted the exploit with an enthusiasm far greater than that with which they had hailed the news of Blenheim. The number of Portobello inns still to be found about our countryside are to-day a relic of the popular frenzy. When the joy-bells of London were ringing, Walpole sagely remarked, “They are ringing the bells now, but they will soon be wringing their hands.”

The opening phase of the “war of Jenkins’ ear” is singularly like the opening phase of the Dardanelles campaign of 1915. Vernon, elated with the success of his bombardment of Porto Bello, attacked the other treaty port, Cartagena, on the coast of Columbia, to be repulsed. Upon his report that he could do nothing further without military support, a combined naval and military expedition was hastily fitted out, and sailed for the Spanish Main, after Vernon’s enterprises had put the Spaniards thoroughly on the *qui vive*.

Before the expedition sailed, The 16th had, to make good some of the deficiencies of the fleet, been embarked to serve as marines, and on landing at Portsmouth after a short cruise in the autumn of 1740, they were met with the news that they were to hand over half their men to form part of one of the six regiments of marines, mostly raised for the attack upon Cartagena. The expedition, one of the most ill-prepared and worst managed of any which has ever left our shores, embarked on August 14th under the command of Lord Cathcart, but contrary winds and contradictory instructions delayed its departure. No fresh meat or vegetables were provided, and before they left the shores of England, the men were ravaged by scurvy. At length the fleet sailed, on November 4th, 1740, to be dispersed in the Atlantic by a series of gales. It eventually rendezvoused at St. Kitts in Jamaica, in the first week of January 1741, having lost seventeen officers and 600 men, including Lord Cathcart. The military command then devolved upon General Wentworth, Vernon being the Admiral.\* After further delays and disputes between the naval and military commanders, the soldiers were eventually landed for the attack upon Cartagena on April 16th. Four days later a night advance against the works was attempted, and failed disastrously, partly owing to want of enterprise and initiative, and partly to the treachery of the guides. After a week's delay, long enough to impregnate the troops with fever, they were re-embarked and for ten sweltering days lay idle in the transports off the coast. Smollett, who was a surgeon on one of the men-of-war, has given in "Roderick Random" a vivid account of the horrors of those ten days : "The men were pent up between decks in small vessels, where they had not room

\* Lawrence Washington, George Washington's elder brother, served in this campaign, and Mount Vernon, which later became the home of the first President of the United States, is named after the British admiral.

## THE 16TH FOOT

to sit upright ; they wallowed in filth, myriads of maggots were hatched in the putrefaction of their sores, which had no other dressing than that of being washed by themselves in their allowance of brandy. Nothing was heard but groans and lamentations, and the language of despair invoking death to deliver them from their miseries."

The expedition returned to Jamaica in May, and an abortive attempt was made upon St. Iago da Cuba. In November reinforcements arrived from England, and another attempt, as abortive, was made against Porto Bello, which had recovered from Vernon's bombardment. During all this time, yellow fever was raging, and at last in October 1742, one officer and twenty-three men of the half battalion which had mustered in August 1740, rejoined the headquarters of the Regiment in England.\*

By that time England was involved in the War of the Austrian Succession, but the ravages of the "war of Jenkins' ear" had left The 16th so weak that it was naturally kept in England to recover, and it had no part in the glories of Dettingen, nor in the misfortunes of Fontenoy.

In July 1745, the Young Pretender landed in Scotland and headed a rising far more serious than that which his father had led. We were at war with France, and our defeat at Fontenoy made the Government apprehensive that Prince Charlie's appearance in the north would be followed by a French attempt on our southern coast. So the 16th was in 1745 kept in Kent. In December, Prince Charles had entered Derby, the furthest point reached in his invasion, and then had retired north to join a contingent of French which had landed at Montrose. On January 28th he defeated General Hawly at Falkirk Muir. A strong English fleet assembled in the Downs in

\* The Regiment's service as marines is commemorated by the wearing of the "marine cuff" by the officers in mess dress and by the playing of "Rule Britannia" before "God Save the King."

the following month, and the Government relieved of the fear of a French invasion, decided to send reinforcements to Scotland. So The 16th were embarked at Gravesend in March, and after a slow passage up the east coast owing to contrary winds, the Regiment reached Leith at the end of April, to be greeted by the news that the Duke of Cumberland had defeated and dispersed the Highlanders at Culloden. Eventually The 16th was landed at Nairn on May 1st, and marched to Elgin, whence it was moved in the following year to Fort Augustus, and there resumed its former task of disarming Highlanders. In 1748 the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle brought the War of the Austrian Succession to an end, and the usual reduction of establishment followed. Next year the 16th was sent to Ireland, and circumstances kept it in garrison there for eighteen years.

There had been constant friction between the British and French colonists in North America, and in 1755 an expedition, sent out under General Braddock to assert British rights, was cut to pieces by the French and their Red Indian allies. This brought us, in 1756, once more into war with France in what is known as the Seven Years' War, which found us in our normal condition of unpreparedness. Ireland was in a disturbed state, and there were lively fears of its invasion by the French, so The 16th were kept in garrison there. Amongst the elder Pitt's efforts to save his country was the passing of the Militia Act of 1759, which gave birth to The Bedfordshire and to The Hertfordshire or as it preferred to be called, Harts Militia. Though, as will be seen, the first territorial connection of The 16th was with the county of Buckinghamshire, the beginning of what was eventually to be the basis of the expansion of The Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment is a development of its history which will receive further consideration, but in the meantime I must return to The 16th.

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On the conclusion of the Seven Years' War in 1763, Spain exchanged with Great Britain, West Florida for Havana, which we had captured. It became desirable to have a garrison in our new possession, and in 1767 The 16th was embarked from Ireland for Pensacola, the port of West Florida. It was stationed there when in 1775 the North American Colonies revolted, and in the following year it was moved to New York, after its capture by Sir William Howe. Howe's success at Brandywine and Burgoyne's occupation of Lake Ticonderoga, created an impression that the rebellion would soon be put down, and as it was considered desirable to have a base in the south from which operations could be undertaken into the basin of the Mississippi and into Georgia, where the insurgent colonists were beginning to be active, The 16th as being familiar with the south, was in 1777 sent back to Pensacola, before Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga had changed our easy optimism into gloom. The 16th were the only reliable troops for the control of an immense territory stretching from the borders of Georgia to the Mississippi ; the remainder of the garrison consisted of a battalion of The 60th, which is described as composed " principally of Germans, condemned criminals and other species of gaol birds," some German levies who took but a languid interest in the cause for which they were fighting, and some ill-equipped formations of local loyalists. The Regiment was split up into detachments. The first of these detachments, comprising the headquarters, and four companies with some local levies and Germans, advanced to the Mississippi, where they established themselves at Baton Rouge, in the autumn of 1778, the commanding officer of The 16th, Lieut.-Colonel Dickson, being in command of the Mississippi district.

Three other companies of The 16th under command of Major Graham formed part of a column under General Prevost which was ordered in November 1779 to invade

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Georgia from the south, to co-operate with a naval and military expedition against Savannah, the chief port of Georgia. There were then no roads in East Florida, and Prevost was obliged to use water transport, and therefore to move along the coast, which was cut up by huge swamps, and very feverish. The difficulty of getting the barges into the creeks and water courses of East Florida kept the men, who besides the three companies of The 16th were mostly local loyalists, very short of supplies, and for days together their chief food was oysters. After an arduous march of more than 500 miles, troubled by guerrillas, Prevost entered Georgia in January, 1779. He captured a small party of Americans at Sunbury, a port to the south of Savannah, and on January 17th, joined the expedition which under Colonel Campbell had captured Savannah. Prevost then advanced up the Savannah river and secured Fort Augusta, which for the time being restored British rule in Georgia.

This was the high tide of success in the south. Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga had called the attention of our enemies in Europe to the opportunity which our difficulties in America afforded, and first France and then Spain declared war upon us. The French and Spanish fleets gradually obtained control of the Spanish Main, and made intercommunication between the scattered British forces over the vast and often roadless spaces of the North American Continent very difficult. When The 16th returned to the south from New York, the insurgents in that quarter had no artillery, and it had not been thought necessary to provide the garrison with any mobile guns, but now the Spaniards who controlled Louisiana could get in troops, guns and ammunition through New Orleans, and it was too late to make good our deficiencies. The Spaniards then saw a fine opportunity for recovering the Floridas cheaply, and the Spanish Governor of Louisiana fitted out an

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expedition against Baton Rouge as a first step to that end. Dickson collected his forces and constructed a redoubt at Baton Rouge, and against this redoubt the Spaniards advanced with a force which outnumbered Dickson four to one. On September 12th, 1779, the Spaniards invested this little post, and after Dickson had repulsed their first attacks, they opened a battery of heavy guns on September 21st, which in a few hours made a great breach in the earthworks. Dickson, who was running out of ammunition and in no case to stand an assault, thereupon surrendered, and the garrison, consisting, besides the four companies of The 16th, of detachments of The 60th and of the Waldeck regiments, was sent to New Orleans as prisoners of war.

Almost simultaneously with the attack by the Spanish on Baton Rouge, a French expedition under the Comte d'Estaing appeared off Savannah to combine with an American force under General Lincoln, in an attempt to recover Georgia. Prevost had prudently withdrawn his troops from Augusta into Savannah before Lincoln's advance, and had at his disposal a garrison of some 1,700 men, composed of Fraser's Highland Regiment, 200 men of the 2nd 60th, two battalions of Hessians, the three companies of The 16th under Major Graham, and some local levies. D'Estaing landed his troops under cover of a bombardment from his ships, and joined Lincoln's Americans. The defences of Savannah had been well prepared and they were gallantly defended. On September 24th, Major Graham led out a skilful sortie at dawn, which caused great confusion amongst the besiegers, the French and Americans firing into each other and losing fifty killed before the mistake was discovered. On October 9th after the siege had lasted a month, the enemy made a desperate effort to carry the place by assault, but was repulsed at all points. Lincoln thereupon retired northwards, and the French fleet sailed away.

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In the spring of 1780, Graham's little detachment of The 16th was moved with other troops to take part in Clinton's siege of Charleston, held by their old opponent Lincoln. Lincoln surrendered on May 8th, and Graham and his men remained in garrison at Charleston until, at the end of the year, they were sent to join Cornwallis in his ill-advised invasion of Carolina. They were with Cornwallis when a part of his force was defeated at Cowpens in January, 1781, and also when he took his revenge by defeating Greene at Guildford Court House on March 15th, 1781. By this time Graham's detachment cannot have numbered 100 men, and it would appear that on account of its weakness it was sent back to Charleston and so escaped the surrender of Cornwallis at York Town, which brought the war to a close.

There still remains a detachment of The 16th to be accounted for. This, consisting of three companies, had been left to garrison Pensacola. The Spanish had followed their success at Baton Rouge by a slow advance north of the Mississippi, but the difficulties of communication by land were great, and they realised that to regain the Floridas, they must capture Pensacola, which could be most readily approached from the sea. So in the spring of 1781 they fitted out an expedition of some 10,000 troops and a strong fleet, and appeared off Pensacola on March 9th, 1781. The garrison under General Campbell had no more than 900 men fit for duty, but they put up such a stout defence that the Spaniards opened trenches and began a regular siege. The attack made little progress until a deserter from Campbell's American levies told the Spaniards of the position of the main magazine, and enabled them to blow it up by dropping a shell into it. The explosion destroyed the redoubt in which the magazine was placed, and killed most of its garrison, whereupon the enemy made an assault which was at first repulsed ; in a second attack

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they succeeded in establishing themselves in the ruined redoubt, whence they commanded a large part of the remaining defences. With his force reduced to 650 men, Campbell capitulated on the condition that his men should march out with the honours of war and be sent to a British possession. Such were the last experiences of The 16th in the war which gave birth to the United States of America.

The Regiment collected its scattered fragments on the conclusion of the War of American Independence, and returned to England in March 1782. In August of that year it received the official title of The 16th or Buckinghamshire Regiment, probably because it was re-raised at Stony Stratford after the flight of James II. After spending seven years on garrison duty, The 16th was embarked from Ireland for Halifax, Nova Scotia in August 1790, and in the following year was moved to Jamaica to renew its unhappy experiences of the Spanish Main. The 16th was in Jamaica when in 1793 the French Revolution broke out. This soon produced disturbances in the French West India Islands, where the negroes and mulattoes rose against the whites, and began to raid and loot their settlements. The French planters in San Domingo applied to the British for help, and in September 1793 a detachment of three companies of The 16th, numbering some 200 men, formed part of a force of about 700 men under Colonel Whitelocke, sent to conquer an island which was in the hands of some 30,000 mulattoes, backed by 500,000 negroes. The enterprise was planned without forethought or judgment ; more and more troops were required, and more and more of them perished of disease, and eventually in June 1794, Lieutenant Vernon and one sergeant of the 200 who had sailed in the previous September returned to Jamaica. By the spring of 1795, The 16th had barely 300 men fit for duty, and it was in this state when it was called upon to deal with an enemy

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within the island. When in 1655 an expedition sent by Oliver Cromwell captured Jamaica, numbers of the slaves of the Spaniards seized the opportunity to escape to the hills, where they established themselves as an independent colony of outlaws, who from time to time raided the British settlers. In 1738 the Government of Jamaica put an end to this state of affairs by concluding an agreement with the Maroons as they were called, by giving them an enclave with defined boundaries, within which they ruled themselves. This arrangement worked satisfactorily and the Maroons gave little trouble, but the general unrest which the French Revolution had caused, and the barbarities which the negroes had perpetrated in San Domingo, created great alarm amongst the white settlers. In fact the Maroons took very little notice of what was going on in the other islands, but the Government of Jamaica was nervous of having an armed body of independent negroes in the middle of the island, and took hasty and ill-advised measures to bring them under control. These the Maroons, with some justice, regarded as a breach of faith, and so began the Maroon war.

The Maroons, who were well armed and good shots, sent their women and movable property into caves in the hills, and established themselves in a sort of city of refuge in rough country, familiar to them but never penetrated by white men. The Governor of Jamaica, Lord Balcarres, began operations against the negroes by endeavouring to establish a cordon round their mountain fastnesses, and a detachment of The 16th formed part of the force detailed for the work. The methods adopted proved to be ineffective for dealing with an active and enterprising enemy, for the Maroons from their central position were able to raid and cut off parties of the encircling troops, and to replenish their supplies of arms and ammunition at the expense of their enemy. The first military commanders sent against them, Colonels

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Sampson and Fitch, were both killed, and the troops, of whom a considerable portion were local militia, were becoming demoralised as the result of this difficult guerrilla warfare, which they saw clearly enough was being badly conducted by their leaders. At this juncture the command devolved upon Colonel Walpole of the 17th Light Dragoons, an officer of energy and ability, and in October 1794 he called up the remainder of The 16th to his assistance. The Regiment was then under the command of Major John Skinner, who when The 16th had been moved from Pensacola to New York in 1776, had joined Tarleton's Legion and had distinguished himself with that force during the War of American Independence. The historian of the Maroon war describes Skinner as "an officer whose known valour and conduct on former occasions had raised him so highly in the esteem and affection of all who knew him, that nothing could have been more welcome to the commander-in-chief or more animating to the troops than his arrival."

Walpole and Skinner put a new aspect on this troublesome little campaign, and in March, 1796 the Maroons tendered their submission. The conclusion of the war was as little honourable to the Government of Jamaica as had been its beginning, for in breach of the agreement between Walpole and the leader of the Maroons, the wretched negroes were shipped off to Halifax, and Walpole refused in consequence to accept the sword of honour which the Government proposed to present to him. The 16th was so weakened by arduous service in the bad climate of Jamaica that it was brought back to England in 1797, and after a short stay at Greenwich, was moved to Scotland, where it was ordered to fill up its depleted ranks by enlisting boys. The Regiment's service in the Spanish Main had indeed caused it heavier losses than had its twenty years of active service under William and Marlborough. The Regiment was quartered in

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Ireland when in 1802 the conclusion of the Peace of Amiens brought about a brief cessation of the war with France.

I have already mentioned that Pitt's Militia Act of 1759 created the modern militia, and that year saw the birth of The Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Militia. The early records of the latter, which preferred to the official title to be known as The Harts Militia, are unfortunately scanty, having been lost in a fire at Hatfield, but it would appear that both battalions were embodied, and served in the south of England until towards the end of the Seven Years' War in 1761. The experiment pleased Parliament, which saw in the Militia a military force more directly under its control than the Regular Army, then regarded as an appendage of the Crown, and as such, with the memories of the Stuarts still fresh, always looked upon with suspicion and jealousy as a menace to the liberties of the people. The drastic reduction of the Regular Army which followed on the close of every war, were, in the main, due to the fact that the British people were more fearful of encroachment by the Crown upon their rights than they were of a foreign enemy. The standing army was looked on as a necessary evil, the Militia was "the constitutional force."

Both The Bedfordshire and The Harts Militia were again embodied during the War of American Independence, and yet again on the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1793. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the rapid development of industry in Great Britain had a serious effect upon recruiting for the Regular Army, and the Government was put to it to replace the heavy losses from sickness amongst the regiments serving in the West Indies, so in 1798 the enlistment of militiamen into the Regular Army was authorised, and the Militia began its function as a feeder to the line. After the passing of this Act, the boys whom The 16th had enlisted on its return

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from the West Indies were transferred to other regiments, and its ranks were filled up from the Militia.

Two years earlier, in 1796, disturbances in Ireland were becoming more frequent, and alarm had been increased by a French attempt under Hoche to land and unite with the rebels, an attempt defeated by bad weather rather than by any adequate military preparation on our part. In 1798 the rebellion in Ireland came to a head, and there were renewed fears of French intervention. There were no reserves in England to meet the emergency, and as the Militia could not be sent out of the country save with its consent, the Government in its extremity asked militia battalions to volunteer for service in Ireland, and The Bedfordshire Militia arrived in Dublin in September, 1798. It remained in Ireland for eighteen months, by which time the suppression of the rebellion and Nelson's victory of the Nile had restored the confidence of the Government, and, as a large number of officers and men had volunteered for service in the line, it was sent back to Bedford to recruit, and remained embodied in England until the Peace of Amiens.

## CHAPTER V

### FROM THE NAPOLEONIC WARS TO THE CHITRAL CAMPAIGN

IT soon became apparent that the Peace of Amiens was no more than a truce. France's policy under the domination of Bonaparte, then First Consul of the Republic, was to unite Europe in opposition to England. We held Malta, which Nelson had captured, as a pledge of the fulfilment of French engagements under the Treaty of Peace, and on our refusal to give up the island without more definite guarantees, Bonaparte used threats so gross that in May 1803 we declared war on France.

Before the British Government had realised the menace to our security at home, which France's power, directed by Bonaparte's genius, constituted, it had returned to its old policy of picking up sugar islands in the West Indies, so that extension of our trade with the Spanish Main might counterbalance French attempts to exclude us from the Continent of Europe. In 1803 we captured St. Lucia and Tobago, and on France dragging Holland after her into the war, the Government enlarged its plans to include the capture of the Dutch possessions in the Spanish Main. To that end in September 1803 we occupied Demerara, now British Guiana, and plans were made for an attack on the adjoining Dutch colony, Surinam (Dutch Guiana). But for this reinforcements were required, and so on January 7th, 1804, The 16th, now under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Skinner, was embarked from Ireland for Barbadoes, where it arrived on March 26th. The 16th was doubtless selected for this expedition because of its

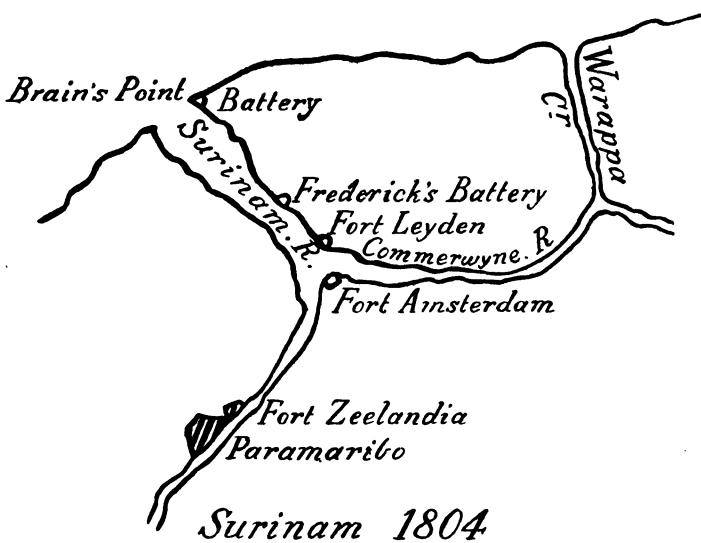
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previous experience of the West Indies, and because of Skinner's proved ability as a leader, but it was an unhappy choice from the Regiment's point of view, for, as we shall see, it kept it sweltering in an unhealthy climate, while most of the other regiments of the British Army were crowding their colours with the battle honours of the Peninsular War.

Upon the surrender of Demerara, a number of the Dutch troops garrisoning that colony were enlisted in the British service under the curious title of The York Light Infantry Volunteers, and they became the comrades of The 16th in the Surinam expedition, an interesting example of the straits to which we were reduced for men at the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars.

The expedition to Surinam consisted of a fleet under Commodore Hood, and a military force of 2,000 men under Major-General Sir Charles Green, composed of The 16th and 64th Foot, the 6th West Indian Regiment, detachments of the 2nd, 60th and of The Yorks Light Infantry Volunteers, and twenty guns. It sailed from Barbadoes on April 7th and anchored off the mouth of the Surinam river on April 25th. Our connections with Surinam had been curious and complicated. It had been in our possession in the seventeenth century, and was ceded to the Dutch by Charles II. in exchange for New York under the Treaty of Breda of 1667, had been captured by us in 1781 and was taken by the French in the following year. In 1796 it was again captured by us, and was restored to the Dutch at the Peace of Amiens in 1802. Thus a number of the settlers were either British or of British sympathies. On resuming possession of the colony, the Dutch had increased the garrison and improved the defences of the Surinam river, which was the only easy means of approach to Paramaribo, the capital of the colony, a town of some 20,000 inhabitants lying twenty miles up the river. A battery had been established at

Brain's Point commanding the mouth of the river from its eastern side, and four miles up the river still on its eastern side another work called Frederick's Battery had been established. Another mile further up, the Surinam was joined by the Commerwyne river, and the mouth of the latter was defended by Forts Leyden and Amsterdam on the eastern bank of the Surinam, and by Fort Purmerend on the western side, while Fort Zeelandia



provided the immediate defence of Paramaribo. The armaments of the forts amounted to some 280 guns, as against the twenty-two with the expedition. As the Surinam river was full of shoals and the forts brought a cross fire to bear on the channel, navigable only at certain states of the tide, the problem which the invaders had to solve was no easy one.

Fortunately this little campaign was marked by a degree of intelligent co-operation between the naval and military forces such as was far from common at this time.

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Green's plan was that the men of war should bombard the battery at Brain's Point, and that when it was reduced, the ships should enter the river and land his main body for attack on the forts, first of the western and then of the eastern bank. Meantime a detachment of 600 men, consisting of the headquarters and four companies of The 16th, the flank companies of The 64th and of The Yorks Light Infantry Volunteers under Brig.-General Maitland, was to sail down the coast to the Warappa creek about twenty miles east of the Surinam, find its way up the creek to the Commerwyne river, and come down it to attack Fort Amsterdam from the rear.

Maitland started on April 26th, and the same day *Pandora* and *Emerald* bombarded and silenced the fort at Brain's Point, which was occupied by a detachment of The 64th. The fleet then entered the river, and on the 28th an attempt was made to land on the western bank of the Surinam to attack Fort Purmerend, but this was defeated by the state of the tide. The next day some negroes disclosed to Green a landing place on the eastern bank below Frederick's Battery, and that night a detachment of 180 men, chiefly of The 64th, under Brigadier Hughes was put ashore. Though barely a mile from the battery, it took the little party five hours to cut their way through the bush and reach the rear of the work. The Dutch garrison was alarmed, and received the attack with grape and musketry, but Hughes' men, charging with the bayonet, speedily forced an entry, whereon the defenders fled to Fort Leyden, after exploding a magazine. Hughes quickly reformed his men, and leading them after the fugitives, charged into Fort Leyden, capturing 120 prisoners. This brilliant coup gave Green possession of the eastern bank of the Surinam below the Commerwyne, and enabled him to land his guns and the remainder of his troops to bombard Fort Amsterdam and open up communications with Maitland.

Maitland, with the headquarters of The 16th, had meantime landed at the mouth of Warappa creek and driven back a Dutch detachment which was defending it. Then collecting boats from the plantations of the Commerwyne, he moved down that river, and on May 3rd landed on the south bank, a couple of miles above Fort Amsterdam. Maitland's boats were then used to bring Green's main body across the river to unite with Maitland's force, and on the 4th, while the guns established near Fort Leyden were bombarding Fort Amsterdam, Green advanced and drove in the enemy's advanced parties and established himself close to the work. The next day the colony surrendered. Thus ended a brilliantly conducted little enterprise which deserved a better fate. It had been planned without any consideration of the major problems which war with France would bring, and within a few months of its having scattered troops on distant enterprises, which could have no direct influence on the issue of the war, the Government was crying out for men to defend England.

The Surinam expedition, in which The 16th under Skinner had played a worthy part, had disastrous consequences for the Regiment. A garrison had to be found for the new conquest, and so The 16th was left to waste away in an unhealthy climate until near the end of the Napoleonic wars. Those wars brought about a great increase in the British Army. By Pitt's Additional Forces Act of 1804, second battalions were added to the majority of the infantry regiments, which at that time had only one battalion. Because it was abroad and required a constant supply of recruits to make good the wastage of disease, The 16th was kept in single blessedness, and thus fortune deprived it of any chance of being represented in the Peninsular War which, until the Great War, supplied more honours to British colours than any other.

It was some time before the pacification of Surinam

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was completed, and in 1806 a detachment of The 16th under Lieutenant Green was attacked at Armina by a large force of insurgent negroes. Green made a gallant defence, and, though the greater part of his little command was either killed or wounded, beat off the attack. For this achievement the inhabitants of the colony presented him with a sword of honour. In the following year, 1807, Skinner gave up the command of the battalion on promotion. He had maintained its efficiency and reputation in very difficult conditions, and it is therefore not surprising that his later career was distinguished. He was promoted Major-General in 1811 and given the Barbadoes command ; he died in 1827 a Lieut.-General. In 1808 on a vacancy occurring in the colonelcy of the Regiment, King George III. conferred it upon Major-General Sir Charles Green, under whom it had served in the capture of Surinam, good evidence that Green had learned to appreciate its quality.

The year 1809 saw important developments in the Regiment's history ; a recruiting company was added to its establishment, and it was organised into service and dépôt companies, while in the same year it was directed to exchange its county title with The 14th Foot, and to become The 16th or Bedfordshire Regiment of Foot. Thus for the first time an official connection was established between The 16th and the county and militia of Bedfordshire, a connection which was at first of little advantage to the battalion sweltering in Surinam, for service on the Spanish Main was deservedly unpopular with the militia, and few militiamen volunteered to transfer to regiments quartered in that unsavoury region. During its stay in Surinam, twenty-seven officers and 500 men of the battalion had died of disease, and a larger number had been invalidated, broken in health mainly by yellow fever. The 16th had landed in Surinam 573 strong, so it can be readily understood why it was difficult

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to raise a second battalion for the Regiment. It was gradually brought home by detachments in 1811 and 1812, but even then its troubles were not over, for in the latter year the headquarters with the last detachment were wrecked on the Taskar Rock off the Irish coast, with the loss of all equipment and regimental property. Fortunately, only 1 man, 1 woman and some children perished and the survivors were taken off the next day by a brig and landed at Beaumaris on the coast of Wales. After recruiting its strength the Regiment was sent to Ireland in 1813. Surinam was finally seceded to the Dutch under the treaty of peace of 1814.

On the outbreak of war in 1803, both The Bedfordshire and The Harts Militia were embodied, and the first organised military volunteers came into existence. The Bedfordshire Corps of Volunteers was under the Earl of Upper Ossory as colonel and consisted of three troops of cavalry, of which the Woburn troop was commanded by Captain the Duke of Bedford, and a battalion of infantry fourteen companies strong. In 1808, under Castlereagh's Local Militia Act, the Bedfordshire Volunteer Cavalry became Yeomanry, and the infantry the 1st and 2nd Regiment of Bedfordshire Local Militia. Hertfordshire also provided a regiment of local militia formed from The Hertfordshire Rifle Volunteers. Castlereagh's Act was an attempt to provide a definite organisation for the volunteers, and they were the precursors of the modern Territorial Army. They remained distinct from the militia proper, of which many regiments during the Napoleonic wars volunteered for service outside the United Kingdom either in the Mediterranean or in Ireland. The Harts Militia served in Ireland from 1811 to 1813, and The Bedfordshire Militia in 1813 and 1814, besides supplying a large number of men for the regular army.\*

\* Sir John Burgoyne says in the "Regimental Records of the Bedfordshire Militia," p. 66, that many men of The Bedfordshire Militia served with

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By the time when The 16th had reassembled its detachments, brought back at long intervals from Surinam, and had recruited its depleted ranks, war had broken out with the United States of America. Napoleon's attempt to destroy British commerce by creating the Continental system had forced our Government to reply with a series of Orders in Council authorising the search of neutral vessels for contraband of war. This at once caused friction with the United States, which in 1812 culminated in a desultory war, creditable to neither side. In 1814, American forces were threatening invasion of Canada, and as Wellington had entered Toulouse in triumph in April of that year, and so brought the Peninsular War to a close, it was decided to send troops at once to Canada from his army. The 16th was ordered there in May from Ireland as an advanced guard of these reinforcements, and was employed first in garrisoning Quebec and Montreal, and later on the frontier. While the Regiment was still so employed, Napoleon in March 1815 escaped from Elba and landed in France. The regiments not in or on their way to Canada had been reduced to peace establishment, and the Government was once more at its wits' end to find men for Wellington. Three battalions, amongst them The 52nd, which took a notable part in Waterloo, were stopped, when under orders for Canada, in time to join the army in Belgium for Waterloo, but those ordered home from Canada, which included The

The 14th at Waterloo, and that some were found dead after the battle in the uniform of the Militia. He accounts for this by saying that until 1818 The 14th was The Bedfordshire Regiment. This is a mistake, for the change of title as we have seen took place in 1809. But it is true that many of the Bedfordshire Militia fought in the ranks of The 14th at Waterloo. Service in the Spanish Main being so unpopular, militiamen would not volunteer for transfer to The 16th whilst it was in Surinam. Thus the practice of the Bedfordshire men volunteering for service in The 14th continued after the change of title was made. As we shall see, the fortune of war kept The 16th in Canada during the Waterloo campaign, and the Bedfordshire Militia was encouraged to send men to The 14th to fill up the ranks of the Regiment, when it was ordered to Flanders for Wellington's last campaign.

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16th, arrived too late for the battle. The 16th was landed at Ostend in August 1815, and marched to Paris, where it formed part of the army of occupation, being quartered at St. Denis.

After the signing of the treaties of peace, The 16th was brought home for garrison duty in England and Ireland, and whilst in the latter country in 1819, was, as it was then called, "embodied for foreign service." It embarked at Cork on August 25th, 1819, and landed at Colombo on February 20th, 1820, the voyage then taking very nearly six months. The 16th remained in Ceylon for eight years and was transferred to Calcutta in January 1829, and remained in India until 1841, when it was brought home after a tour of foreign service lasting twenty-one years. After five years' garrison duty at home, the Regiment was again embodied for foreign service in 1846, in which year it was sent to Gibraltar, and after a year at that station was moved to Corfu. During the long peace that followed Waterloo, the ordinary practice for a line battalion was to do a tour of foreign service lasting for about twenty years, to be followed by a tour of home service of five or six years. The foreign tours were alternatively in India and in the Colonies. Thus the tour of The 16th which began in 1846, was a colonial tour, and after a few years in the pleasant isles of Greece, it was sent to the West Indies, which have a black record in the history of the Regiment, for to add to its unpleasant experiences in that quarter of the globe, which have already been recorded, it was kept tucked away in Jamaica during the Crimean War, and in Canada during the Indian Mutiny, returning home in June, 1857.

The system which Wellington had adopted after Waterloo had been to keep as much of the army abroad as possible in order to save it from reductions, which Parliament was constantly demanding. This, while it

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was probably the best expedient which could have been adopted, left the Army at home in a very weak state and practically without reserves, for enlistment in the Regular Army was for long service with the colours, and Wellington's measures could not be applied to the Militia. That force had between 1816 and 1852 almost disappeared, its sole establishment consisting of a few officers who did no duty. The second battalions of line regiments which had been created during the Napoleonic Wars, had been abolished, and regiments abroad were represented at home by dépôt companies which had no permanent station. Thus while The 16th was in Corfu, the dépôt companies of the Regiment were first at Cork and then in Guernsey. The territorial connection established in 1809 had thus almost disappeared.

Fortunately in 1852 a letter from Sir John Burgoyne pointing out our military deficiencies was made public, and the Militia was re-established. A regular system of annual training for the Militia was organised. So when we became involved in the Crimean War, the Militia was able to supply the Regular Army with 33,000 men. When we consider that the British Army which Lord Raglan landed in the Crimea for the battle of the Alma numbered no more than 27,000 men, it will be seen that without the contribution of the Militia we could not have maintained the war with Russia.

During the war in 1855, ground was acquired at Aldershot for the training of the Militia, and both The Bedfordshire and The Harts Militia were amongst the first battalions to be quartered at what is now our chief military station. The Bedfordshire Militia was re-embodied as the Bedfordshire Light Infantry, while The Harts Militia was taken to Aldershot by James, 2nd Marquis of Salisbury. The first Marquis had commanded the battalion from 1773 to 1815 ; the connection between the Cecil family and the battalion has thus

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been continuous from its early days to the present time.\*

The Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny threw a glaring light on our military weakness, and were followed by a long series of military reforms. One of the most important of these occurred in 1858, when a second battalion was added to all line regiments up to The 25th, the second battalions raised during the Napoleonic wars having been abolished on the declaration of peace. Thus in that year The 16th was for the first time composed of two battalions. The second battalion was raised in Ireland, and early in its career was required for Imperial service. In 1861 civil war broke out between the Federal and Confederate States of America, popularly known as the North and the South. The Confederate States embarked two envoys to Europe, Messrs. Slidell and Mason, upon one of our Royal Mail steamers, the *Trent*. The *Trent* was stopped by a Federal frigate, and the two envoys were taken from under our flag. This incident, known as "the Trent affair," aroused great excitement at home, and but for the good sense of the Federal President, Abraham Lincoln, and the calming intervention of Queen Victoria, might easily have involved us in war with the United States. Before the dispute was adjusted, it was decided to send reinforcements to Canada, and the 1st Battalion under Lieut.-Colonel Peacocke was embarked for Canada and sent to Montreal, the 2nd under Lieut.-Colonel Langley following a few weeks later for Halifax. The Fenians in the United States used the opportunity of the Civil War to fish in troubled waters, and engaged from time to time in filibustering raids into Canada, which revealed to them the weakness of our long frontier. This encouraged them to organise a more serious enter-

\* The 3rd Marquis was Colonel of the battalion and the present Marquis commanded the battalion from 1892, when he was Lieut.-Colonel Viscount Cranborne.

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prise, and not long after the end of the Civil War, on June 1st, 1866, Canada was startled by the news that 1,500 Fenians had crossed the Niagara river from Buffalo, in the State of New York, and landed in Canada at Fort Erie, a long disused British work. Field-Marshal Lord Wolseley, then Lieut.-Colonel Wolseley of the headquarter staff in Canada, has left us an account of this affair in his "Story of a Soldier's Life." He says :

" Although the Government of Ottawa would do nothing beforehand to prepare for such a contingency, they now acted promptly. The greater part of the Canadian Volunteer Militia in Upper Canada were at once called out, and Colonel Peacocke, of the Bedfordshire Regiment,\* an able and well instructed officer, was placed in command of the Niagara Peninsula.

" Colonel Peacocke at first established his Headquarters at St. Catherine's, a place well chosen for the purpose. Pushing on to the suspension bridge over the Niagara river at Clifton, he found no enemy there, and being naturally anxious to hold Chippewa, a point of strategic importance, he reached that place on the night of June 1st. Unfortunately he did not move the following morning, June 2nd, until 7 a.m., by which hour he might have been at New Germany, only six miles from Chippewa by the direct road. It was an extremely hot day, and as he had left his knapsacks behind, the men suffered much in consequence during the march. Why he did not move by rail to Black Creek I know not, but it is easy to be wise after the event. His locally obtained guides were either fools by nature or through cowardice, for they took his column a great round by the river road to Black Creek and thence to New Germany.

" A Militia colonel and a captain of the Royal Engineers, neither being either wise or experienced soldiers, had been sent to Port Colborne, the southern

\* 1st Battalion.

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entrance to the Welland Canal, at the same time that Colonel Peacocke had been sent to Chippewa. Ordered to proceed thence in a tug, and with some Militia as a guard on board, for the purpose of reconnoitring Fort Erie and of patrolling the Niagara river as far north as Navy Island, they took it upon themselves to land their men at Fort Erie instead. There they were attacked by the Fenians, and their detachment was mostly either killed, wounded or captured. The Militia captain in command escaped in borrowed civilians' clothes ; having shaved his beard and whiskers he temporarily found refuge in a rick of hay. Another colonel of Militia, when on the march, in command of his battalion, came suddenly upon the enemy at a cross roads called Ridgeway. Thus surprised, he and his battalion, after some loss on both sides were soon in full retreat at no slow pace. In the formation he had advanced in, he was bound to be surprised, and when some nervous men, upon seeing a few Fenian officers on horseback in the distance, cried out in panic, 'Cavalry', the wildest confusion ensued. Had the Fenians been worth anything as soldiers, few of their opponents would have supped that night in their own bivouac. It was a short skirmish between two small parties of undisciplined, untrained men, and it was, I should imagine, a toss up which side disbanded first. Speaking from my own experience of the Canadian Militia I have every reason to think most highly of and to believe thoroughly in them when they are properly handled. Had they been so handled in their skirmishes during this Fenian raid, they would, I feel sure, have bagged every Irish American who had been landed at Fort Erie. There would have been no stampede that day on the Ridge Road had the Militia engaged been commanded by a Militia officer like Colonel George Denison, of the Canadian Bodyguard.

"As soon as the news of this Fenian raid reached

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Montreal, General Sir John Michael, then commanding the forces in Canada, sent me off in hot haste to the seat of this trouble. Before my arrival he had ordered a Battery of Field Artillery, and what odds and ends could be scraped together in Toronto and its neighbourhood, to leave that evening for the Niagara frontier under my esteemed Crimean friend, Colonel (now General) R. W. Lowry, C.B., then commanding the 1st Battalion of the North Lancashire Regiment. His battalion had already gone to the front, where he was to be joined by detachments of the Bedfordshire Regiment and of the Royal Rifles. Upon reaching Clifton at 8 p.m. that evening by rail, the authorities declined to send us any further until daylight the following morning, as they thought the bridges and culverts on the line had probably been destroyed. At midnight we were joined by a battalion of volunteers.

"We started from Clifton by rail the following morning, June 3rd, 1866, at 3.30 a.m., for Black Creek, on the Niagara river, a distance of only ten miles. We only travelled about four or five miles an hour, so as to be able to pull up very quickly should the line be cut or otherwise obstructed. We were detained there a couple of hours until the railway authorities had examined the line ahead, and did not get away from it until 7 a.m., when we made for Frenchman's Creek, six miles further on. We detrained at Frenchman's Creek, as Colonel Lowry intended to march thence upon Fort Erie, which was close by, and engage our Fenian enemy should he be there still. I soon had my horse out of its box and rode forward to reconnoitre towards Fort Erie. Upon reaching it I was astonished to see a United States gunboat anchored in mid-stream with a huge barge astern of her that was crowded with Fenians, as we afterwards ascertained to the number of about six or seven hundred.

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"At Fort Erie we found a few wounded Fenians and one of their dead, also some wounded Canadian Volunteers. In the afternoon Colonel Lowry and I went on board the U.S. gunboat *Michigan*, which had the barge-full of Fenians fastened on astern. There we found General Barry, of the United States Army, who commanded at Buffalo. He and the naval officer commanding the gunboat were both well bred gentlemen and received us kindly. So ended this fiasco of a Fenian invasion. Of course the United States Government could have prevented it from ever taking place. But in a country whose supreme ruler and all his subordinate governors are elected by the people every few years, it is not always practically possible for them to adopt strong measures for the suppression of even such a nuisance as a Fenian raid. It was our policy throughout this business carefully to avoid taking any steps which the Fenians could preach up in their newspapers as a violation of American territory or as an injury done by us to some law-abiding citizen of the great Republic."

I should add to this description that all this happened in the days before the Government of Canada was organised as it is to-day, and the provincial government was very much at sea, while of the general in command of the raided district Wolseley says : "Our general commanding in the province of Ontario was useless for any military purpose." Peacocke's task was therefore far from easy ; he was sent off without information or proper orders, and, in fact, though Wolseley did not know it, he asked for a train to take his men to Black Creek, his request being refused on the grounds of expense !

As the result of this experience, the Canadian Government decided to make serious arrangements for the training of its Militia, and the 1st Battalion of The 16th was stationed in a camp of exercise in the Niagara Peninsula to provide instructors for the Canadian Militia,

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returning to Montreal in 1863 and going in the next year to Toronto. During this time the 2nd Battalion was kept in Nova Scotia, whence it was sent to the West Indies in 1866 and was brought home to Ireland in 1869 and stationed at the Curragh. There it was joined by the 1st Battalion early in 1870 from Canada, where it had been kept in garrison in consequence of further Fenian enterprises culminating in Riel's Rebellion, which resulted in the Red River expedition of 1870, and the occupation by Wolseley of Riel's headquarters, Fort Garry.

The return of the 1st Battalion from Canada was due to the reorganisation of the British Army, introduced by Mr. (afterwards Lord) Cardwell, then Secretary of State for War. That reorganisation comprised the abolition of the purchase of commissions, the introduction of short service with the colours, the creation of a reserve for the regular army, the territorialisation of the line, and the grouping with the regular battalions of the Militia and volunteers of their territorial area. It involved to the line the abolition of their numbers. The Cardwell system depended for its efficiency upon maintaining a balance between the battalions at home and abroad, and the equalisation of the tours of home and foreign service, and as one of the measures to obtain this balance, the regular battalions in Canada were brought home. Changes so drastic which severed old associations and interfered with cherished traditions were naturally at first unpopular, but the Cardwell system has stood the test of time, as being that best suited to the peculiar conditions of the British Empire, and in its main lines remains to-day.

The introduction of this new system took time, and it was not until 1876 that the 2nd Battalion started for India for its first regular tour of foreign service ; it was not until 1881 that Bedford became the official centre of the Bedfordshire regimental district, The Bedfordshire Light Infantry Militia and The Hertfordshire Militia,

forming the 3rd and 4th Battalions of the Regiment, with the volunteer battalions of the two counties incorporated in the Regiment as a whole. The foreign tour of the 2nd Battalion was completed without notable incident, and the 1st Battalion, after a short tour on the Mediterranean, in 1890 left for India in 1891.

Not long after the arrival of the 1st Battalion in India, the Mehtar of Chitral, Aman-ul-Mulk, died in August 1892, and a struggle for the succession began among his sons. In January 1895, the then Mehtar, Nizam-ul-Mulk, was shot while out hunting, and a turbulent neighbour of Chitral, the Pathan chief Umra Khan of Jandul, who had long been a source of trouble to the Government of India, thinking he could play a hand with profit to himself, invaded Chitral at the head of 3,000 Pathans, nominally on behalf of Sher Afzul, an uncle of Nizam-ul-Mulk, who had been allowed to escape from Kabul, where he had taken refuge. Umra Khan captured Kala Drosh, the southernmost fort of the State of Chitral, and advanced on Chitral town, the majority of the Chitralis joining him and Sher Afzul. After a skirmish on March 3rd, Umra Khan shut up and besieged in the fort of Chitral a British force consisting of the British agent, Surgeon-Major Robertson, Lieutenant Gurdon, the assistant to the agent, Captains C. V. F. Townshend,\* Baird and Campbell, Surgeon-Captain Whitchurch and Lieutenant Harley of the 14th Sikhs, with 99 men of the 14th Sikhs and 301 of the Kashmir Infantry. Soon afterwards news reached India that a small detachment of troops on its way to Chitral had met with disaster, its commander, Captain Ross, being killed, the other British officer with the party, Lieutenant Jones, wounded, while 56 men out of a total of 71 had been killed. It was also known that another small detachment under Lieutenants

\* Afterwards Lieut.-General Sir C. Townshend, the defender of Kut-el-Amara.

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Edwardes and Fowler,\* engaged in taking ammunition to Chitral, before the news of Umra Khan's advance had been known had been surrounded. Both these officers were later captured by Umra Khan.

The Government of India, on receipt of the news of Umra Khan's advance, authorised Lieut.-Colonel Kelly of the 32nd Pioneers, the senior officer in Gilgit, to take such measures as he considered appropriate, but as the distance from Chitral to Gilgit is 220 miles through very difficult mountainous country, it was not expected that he would be able to reach and relieve the besieged garrison. Therefore the 1st Division of the Indian Field Army, which had been ordered to mobilise on March 14th, was constituted the Chitral Relief Force under the command of Lieut.-General Sir R. Low, and ordered to advance from Nowshera into Chitral.

The Chitral Relief Force was composed of three brigades, divisional and lines of communication troops. The 1st Brigade, commanded by Brig.-General A. Kinlock, was composed of the 1st Battalion The Bedfordshire Regiment, 1st Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps, the 15th Sikhs, and the 37th Dogras ; the 2nd and 3rd Brigades were commanded by Brig.-Generals H. Waterfield and W. F. Gatacre. There are three passes through the range of hills dividing the valley of the Indus in the neighbourhood of Nowshera from the Swat Valley, which must be crossed in an advance from British India to Chitral. Those passes from east to west are the Shakot, Malakand and Mora, each about 3,500 feet high. All of these passes were reported to be strongly held, the other two more strongly than the Malakand, and Sir Robert Low then decided to threaten the Shakot and Mora passes and to storm the Malakand.

A start was made from Hoti Mardan on April 1st, and in accordance with this plan the 1st Brigade bivouacked

\* Now Lieut.-General Sir John Fowler.

at Lundkwar in full sight of and directly opposite the Shakot Pass, while a strong body of the divisional cavalry demonstrated against the Mora Pass. The attack on the Malakand Pass was made on April 3rd. It had been Sir Robert Low's intention to use only the 2nd Brigade for this attack, but on finding that the enemy were much stronger than had been reported, he decided to use the 1st Brigade to support the 2nd. In the first reports the number of the enemy in the pass had been estimated as 3,000, but after the action it was reported to have been 12,000. The 2nd Brigade made a direct attack on the pass under cover of an artillery bombardment, with the Gordon Highlanders on the right and the 14th Sikhs on the left, but owing to the steepness of the ascent and to the enemy's resistance, progress was slow at first, and Sir Robert Low ordered a battalion from the 1st Brigade to support the direct attack. The King's Royal Rifles were ordered up for this purpose, while The Bedfordshire and 37th Dogras were directed to circle round in rear of the Gordons and overlap the enemy's left. The Bedfordshire, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel A. M. Paterson, after an arduous climb succeeded in crowning the height on our right of the pass, a height long known as Bedfordshire Hill, and this threat to their left, combined with the assault of the 2nd Brigade, caused the enemy to beat a hasty retreat. Colonel Paterson with his own battalion and the Dogras at once took up the pursuit of the fleeing enemy, halting at dusk in the village of Khar in the Swat Valley. An attempt was made to get mules over the pass to them, but the track was so difficult that they were unable to get further than the top of the pass, and the battalion after a cold and uncomfortable night at Khar was brought back to the pass the next morning. Lieut.-Colonel Paterson and Major Nesbit of the Regiment were mentioned in despatches for their conduct in this action.

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On the next afternoon at 1 p.m. on April 4th, the 1st Brigade led the advance into the Swat Valley, Lieut.-Colonel Paterson commanding the advanced guard, consisting of his own battalion and No. 4 Company Bengal Sappers and Miners, and near Khar the brigade became engaged with a force of some 4,000 of the enemy, who after a sharp action were driven off. This proved to be the battalion's last action in this little campaign, for the transport of the 1st Brigade having been delayed in the Malakand Pass, the Brigade was left at Khar to hold the Swat Valley, while the remainder of the force continued the advance on Chitral. After the enemy had been driven from the Panjkora river on April 13th, the welcome news arrived that Lieut.-Colonel Kelly with the 32nd Pioneers after a remarkable march from Gilgit had relieved the besieged garrison of Chitral Fort, and the enemy's resistance collapsed. About the middle of May, when the Swat Valley became unhealthy for white troops, the 1st Bedfords and 1st K.R. Rifles were moved up to the Laram Pass in the range which divides the Swat from the Panjkora valleys, and on August 14th the Battalion set out on its return march to India.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

THE discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 was the cause of an immediate inrush of foreigners and foreign capital into the Transvaal. Johannesburg quickly became the largest and richest town in that country, and the Boer farmers watched its growth with anxious and suspicious eyes. Being very jealous of their independence, and fearful of being outvoted at the polls, they refused civic rights to the new settlers, while at the same time exploiting them to the utmost as a source of revenue. The Boer Government would have been within its rights in prohibiting or limiting gold-mining within its territory, but when the mine-owners and miners became the largest taxpayers of the country, it was clearly wrong to deny them representation. The Uitlanders, as the Boers called them, had then very real grievances, and to all their representations and to those of the British Government the Boers turned a deaf ear. The British Government had by treaty, control over the foreign relations of the Transvaal, and a large part of the capital in the mining industry was British, while the number of British subjects in the Rand was considerable.

Believing that the British Government was unwilling or powerless to help them, a number of the leading Uitlanders entered into a conspiracy with their friends in the Cape Colony, and on December 29th, 1895, a raiding party led by Dr. Jameson, a lieutenant of Cecil Rhodes, started for Johannesburg from the neighbourhood of Mafeking. The party included a number of retired

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officers of the Regular Army, and its arrival in Johannesburg was to have been the signal for a rising. The Boer Government was well informed of what was afoot, and the raiders were surrounded and captured before they could reach their destination. Dr. Jameson and his colleagues were handed over to the British Government and were tried for high treason in London while the Boer Government took drastic action against the conspirators in Johannesburg.

This ill-judged and ill-managed affair greatly embarrassed our Government, the legitimate grievances of the Uitlanders were lost to sight, and the sympathies of the Continental powers of Europe, voiced in an injudicious telegram from the German Kaiser to President Kruger, were all with the Boer farmers, who were held to be justly asserting their right to freedom and independence. Worse still, this unfortunate adventure led the Boers to become even more stiff-necked and truculent, and Kruger started a steady importation of arms from Europe, paid for largely by the taxes levied on mine-owners and miners, who had no voice in the Government. These developments caused increasing alarm to the British in the Cape Colony, particularly in Kimberley the centre of the diamond mining industry, which was near the frontier of the Orange Free State, and in Natal. In response to urgent appeals, the British Government began to reinforce quietly our small garrison in South Africa. In the summer of 1899 the Natal Government pressed urgently for further reinforcements, and 5,000 troops were ordered to Natal mainly from India. Even with this reinforcement our garrison in South Africa numbered only 27,000 men, a force insufficient to defend the long frontier of Natal and the Cape Colony, while British Bechuanaland and the Rhodesias had to be left to look after themselves. The Boers, it was estimated, could put into the field from 50,000 to 60,000 well armed men.

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President Kruger affected to be alarmed by the despatch of these reinforcements. Early in October 1899, news reached England that the Boer Government had stopped the weekly shipment of gold to England amounting to about £500,000, and that the Burghers both in the Transvaal and the Free State had been called out. The British Government thereupon called up the army reserves of our first Army Corps on October 3rd, and six days later President Kruger sent an ultimatum to the British Government demanding the immediate withdrawal of our troops from the frontiers, the withdrawal of all the reinforcements which had reached South Africa during the last year, and the return to their stations of those which were at sea. The British Government naturally refused to discuss this peremptory demand, and on October 12th forces of the Free State and the Transvaal crossed the frontier of Natal.

We had on the frontier of Natal at Glencoe, a brigade of infantry, a brigade of field artillery, one cavalry regiment and three companies of mounted infantry, commanded by Major-General Sir Penn Symons, while the main body of our force in Natal, numbering some 8,000 men, was in Ladysmith. General Sir George White, who arrived shortly before the outbreak of war, commanded our forces in Natal. On the morning of October 20th, a Boer force occupied Talana Hill near Glencoe, and this position General Symons attacked. The hill was carried with a loss of forty-one killed and 180 wounded, Symons being among the killed, but it was soon discovered that the Boers were getting round both flanks of our little force, and a retreat on Ladysmith was ordered. The next day, October 21st, a force sent out from Ladysmith under General French,\* who commanded White's cavalry, met and defeated a body of Boers at Elandslaagte, a few miles north-east of Ladysmith.

\* The late Field Marshal the Earl of Ypres.

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Despite this success the Boer advance into Natal continued and White, in an endeavour to prevent the Boers from surrounding him, engaged them on October 30th at Lombards Kop, in which action two battalions were cut off and surrounded at Nicholson's Nek. White had to withdraw into the town, in which he was at once invested by the Boers. Soon after their advance into Natal the Boers had crossed their western frontiers and had begun the siege of Mafeking and Kimberley.

Such was the situation which on his arrival at Cape Town on October 31st confronted General Sir Redvers Buller, who had been appointed commander of the expeditionary force sent out from England. This force consisted of an army corps, a cavalry division which included a battalion of mounted infantry, and line of communications troops. To the mounted infantry battalion the 2nd Bedfordshire furnished a section of one officer and twenty-five men. The original plan of campaign had been that the defence of Natal should be left to Sir George White, and that Buller should advance from the Cape Colony through the Free State on Bloemfontein. But the situation in Natal proved to be so serious that Buller decided to go with the bulk of his force to Natal and endeavour to raise the siege of Ladysmith, while he sent Lord Methuen with part of the 1st Division to advance along the Kimberley railway from De Aar, and Sir William Gatacre to the neighbourhood of Stormberg to cover the railway line from East London to De Aar.

Not long after these dispositions had been made, the British public received a series of shocks. On November 28th, Methuen after driving back the Boers in two actions at Belmont and Graspan, failed in an attack on the Boer position at Magersfontein ; on December 10th, Gatacre was repulsed in an attempt on Stormberg, and as a final blow, the news arrived that on December 15th,

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Buller had failed in an attempt to cross the Tugela at Colenso.

In consequence of this bad news, the Government appointed Lord Roberts to the supreme command in South Africa and arranged for the despatch of considerable reinforcements. A 5th Division had been mobilised at home, Sir George White's command being the 4th, and it was all on its way to South Africa by December 13th. On December 2nd, orders were issued for the mobilisation of a 6th Division, and in this division, commanded by General Kelly Kenny, the 2nd Bedfordshire Regiment formed part of the 12th Infantry Brigade. The Battalion embarked for South Africa on December 16th, 1899, and disembarked at Port Elizabeth on January 13th, 1900. A 7th Division and certain other troops followed soon after the 6th Division.

Lord Roberts decided to revert to the original plan of campaign and to make his advance from the Cape Colony through the Orange Free State on Bloemfontein and Pretoria. His first object was the relief of Kimberley, and to effect this he proposed to make his advance up the Modder River, turning the position held by the Boers under Cronje at Magersfontein. In order to conceal his intentions from the Boers, he disposed of the troops, who had followed him from England, so as to give the impression that his advance would be made from Naauwpoort Junction through Colesberg, over the Orange River by the Norvalspont bridge, the direct line of advance to Bloemfontein. General French, who with his chief Staff Officer, Colonel Douglas Haig,\* had escaped from Ladysmith just before it was beleaguered, had with a force mainly of cavalry (in the mounted infantry battalion of which was the M.I. section under Lieutenant F. A. D. Stevens,† found by the 2nd

\* The late Field Marshal Earl Haig.

† Now Lieut.-Colonel F. A. D. Stevens, C.B.E.

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Battalion), advanced from Naauwpoort, and by bluff and skill had gained possession of Rensberg siding and contained a superior force of Boers in the hills about Colesberg.

As part of the same plan, the 6th Division was on its arrival sent to Naauwpoort, and the 12th Brigade under Major-General Clements was moved up to Rensberg siding to support French, the 2nd Bedfordshire arriving there on January 21st, 1900. French's position consisted of little more than a long line of outposts in a rough semi-circle facing the Colesberg Heights. In this line the right was entrusted to General Clements, and the Battalion occupied a number of heights on this flank. It was commanded by Colonel Cavenagh; Major and Brevet-Lieut.-Colonel T. D. Pilcher,\* the second in command, was sent to take charge of a column in Griqualand West, and subsequently commanded Pilcher's M.I., so Major T. Hammond † was acting as second in command.

In the meantime, Lord Roberts was secretly preparing for his advance up the Modder River, and in order that he might have the mobility necessary to deal with an enemy who moved on horseback, he decided to increase greatly the number of his mounted troops. Several mounted units had arrived from Australia and New Zealand, and to these were added regiments of mounted rifles raised in the Cape Colony, and eight mounted infantry regiments, to which every regular battalion on the Cape side supplied a contingent. Accordingly, early in February, Captain Waldy and Lieutenants Selous and Jebb ‡ and 120 men left the Battalion to form a company of the 6th M.I.

The concentration of Roberts' main body near the

\* Afterwards Major-General T. D. Pilcher, C.B., Colonel of the Regiment.

† Now Colonel T. Hammond.

‡ Now Brigadier-General G. D. Jebb, C.B., C.M.G., C.B.E., D.S.O.

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Modder River south of Magersfontein, was begun at the end of January, and French with his cavalry and mounted infantry was secretly withdrawn from his position in front of Colesberg to join it, while the 6th Division from Naauwpoort was sent in the same direction, the place of the 12th Brigade being taken in the division by a newly-formed 18th Brigade.

General Clements was left to hold the Colesberg Boers with a weakened force consisting of the 12th Brigade and some attached troops. Following French's example, he managed by boldness and bluff to make the enemy suppose that he was much stronger than he was, and so maintained a very extended position until near the middle of February. The Boers then began to get an inkling of the true state of affairs, and started to work round Clements' flanks. The General then ordered a withdrawal during the night of 13th-14th February back to Arundel, where a shorter line covering Naauwpoort junction could be held. As the attention of the Boers became pressing, the time of withdrawal was advanced, and owing to the extent of front held, it was difficult to get fresh orders to all the companies. Consequently, B Company of the 2nd Bedfordshire and two companies 2nd Wiltshire were left behind. B Company managed to extricate itself and get back, but the two Wiltshire companies were cut off and surrounded. Meantime, Lord Roberts' movement round Cronje's flank had begun on February 9th, and on February 15th, French with his cavalry broke through Cronje's left flank and raised the siege of Kimberley. Cronje thereupon retreated up the Modder River, and on February 17th his further progress was stopped near Paardeberg by French's return from Kimberley. On February 18th, Cronje was attacked in an entrenched laager on the Modder River at Paardeberg by Lord Roberts' main body, which was directed by his Chief of Staff, Lord Kitchener, Lord Roberts being

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unfortunately detained at Jacobsdal by sickness. A gallant but fruitless attempt to rush the laager was made by the M.I. in pursuance of orders of Lord Kitchener, and in this attempt the M.I. suffered severely. Of the Bedfordshire Company, Captain Waldy came through the attack scathless, to be mortally wounded at the end of the day by a chance pom-pom shell. Lieutenant Selous and Corporal Williams were both severely wounded, but gave up their places in the ambulance to other wounded. The native ambulance driver was unable to find the place where they had been left, and after the laager was taken, it was found that they had crawled down to the river bank in search of water, had died there and had been buried by the Boers. The only officer remaining with the company, Lieutenant Jebb, was taken prisoner with eleven men while drawing water in the evening from the river under an agreement with the Boers. They were sent off to Pretoria, where they remained as prisoners until we captured the town.

Lord Roberts, pushing back the retreating Boers who attempted to stand at Poplar Grove and Driefontein, entered Bloemfontein on March 13th. The original M.I. section of the 2nd Bedfordshire, then with the 2nd M.I., and the Bedfordshire Company of the 6th M.I., both were with the army which entered the Free State capital.

After its withdrawal to Arundel, Clements' force was reinforced, and the effect of Lord Roberts' advance into the Free State soon caused the Boers to make detachments from Colesberg. Towards the end of February, Clements was able to advance towards the Orange River, and his force arrived at Norvalspont on March 4th, to find the bridge destroyed. A week later the force crossed the Orange River by a pontoon bridge which had been thrown across it, and began its march to Bloemfontein by Philippolis, Fauresmith and Petrusburg. The 12th

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Brigade arrived at Bloemfontein on April 4th, and rejoined the 6th Division.

Lord Roberts' army during the siege of Cronje's laager and in its march from Paardeberg to Bloemfontein was on short rations owing to the capture by De Wet of one of the main supply columns, and during the siege of the laager, the men had been drinking the water of the Modder, fouled by Cronje's dead animals. The combined result of inadequate food and bad water was to produce a severe epidemic of enteric amongst the troops soon after their arrival in Bloemfontein. The effect of this was more serious, because in order to make the army more mobile, medical equipment had been cut down to a minimum, and the doctors were unable to cope with the epidemic. By a strange blunder, for there was ample uninfected land available, the 12th Brigade was ordered to bivouac on the ground vacated by the 18th Brigade, which had had many cases of enteric. The 12th Brigade was naturally infected almost at once, and in a short time the 2nd Bedfordshire had half its officers and about one-third of its men down with the fever. Owing to lack of milk, beds and nurses, a large number of them died, proper hospital supplies being unobtainable until the railways destroyed by the Boers were repaired. In the case of the troops who had fought at Paardeberg, the epidemic was probably inevitable, preventive inoculation not being then available, but it was only sheer stupidity which involved the 12th Brigade in the disaster.

On May 3rd the battalion was joined by the volunteer company of the Regiment under Captain Lingard Green. The company was composed of three officers and 113 rank and file of the volunteer battalion of The Bedfordshire Regiment, and of the two volunteer battalions of The Hertfordshire Regiment. Altogether seven officers and 272 N.C.O.'s and men of these battalions served with the 2nd Battalion during the war.

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As in the case of the Boers confronting Clements at Colesberg, so also with the Boers opposing Buller in Natal, Lord Roberts' advance into the Free State had caused withdrawals, and on February 28th Ladysmith had been relieved. Mafeking remained the one place where a British garrison was shut up, and the situation had undergone a dramatic change. Unfortunately it took time to repair the railways, and Lord Roberts was unable to get up supplies sufficiently quickly to enable him to follow up his success promptly. A long halt therefore took place at Bloemfontein, and during this halt the mounted troops were further increased and reorganised. The 2nd M.I., in which was Lieutenant F. A. D. Stevens' section, became the 3rd M.I. Corps, commanded by Colonel T. D. Pilcher of the Regiment, the 6th M.I. joining the 2nd M.I. Corps commanded by Colonel De Lisle. To make good the losses of Paardeberg, Lieutenant Strong had been sent to join the 6th M.I. from the 2nd Battalion, and Captain H. I. Nicholl,\* attached to the 4th Battalion who had volunteered for service and brought a draft to Colesberg, on the arrival of the 2nd Battalion in Bloemfontein was appointed to command the Bedfordshire Company of the 6th M.I.

In the middle of March the Boers had succeeded in ambushing a British force at Sanna's Post, east of Bloemfontein, and in capturing the adjacent waterworks which supplied the town. Both the 2nd and 6th M.I. were engaged with the force sent out to recover the waterworks, and thereafter formed part of a force mainly composed of mounted troops under General Ian Hamilton which after clearing the right flank up to Tabanchu and the Basutoland border, formed the right flank of Lord Roberts' advance northwards. That advance began on May 3rd. French with the cavalry on the left flank, and Ian Hamilton with his mounted troops on the right flank,

\* Now Lieut.-Colonel H. I. Nicholl, D.S.O.

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successfully turned the positions which the Boers took up, and Kroonstad was entered with little fighting on May 12th.

When the main army under Roberts moved north from Bloemfontein, the 6th Division was left under Kelly Kenny to secure that town and protect the communications in the Free State. So on May 18th the 12th Brigade under Clements was sent by rail up to Winburg and was then moved to Senekal, where it was employed in escorting convoys. On May 27th, Lord Roberts crossed the Vaal, and three days later Johannesburg surrendered, while on June 5th Pretoria was occupied. There Lieut. G. D. Jebb and the eleven men who had been captured with him at Paardeberg were found and released. Six days later on June 11th, the Boers, encouraged by the success of De Wet's raids on the Free State, made a stand at Diamond Hill and were defeated in a battle in which the 6th M.I. took a distinguished part and were complimented both by Ian Hamilton and the Commander-in-Chief.

After the occupation of Pretoria, Lord Roberts determined to put an end to De Wet's activities and to complete the pacification of the Orange Free State, which somewhat prematurely had been constituted the Orange River Colony. For this purpose he formed a number of flying columns, of which one operating from Senekal under Clements was composed of 700 mounted troops, the 8th Battery R.F.A. and the 2nd Bedfordshire, 2nd Worcestershire and 2nd Wiltshire Regiments. During its first march, this column was attacked by Boers in camp at Reitsfontein, and the battalion had one officer and five men wounded. On the return march to Senekal, a strong force of Boers was met outside the town and driven off. Clements' column, working in conjunction with others, slowly drove the Boers opposed to them towards Lindley, where on May 31st a body of Imperial Yeomanry had been surrounded and forced to surrender. On July 5th

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Clements detached the 2nd Bedfordshire with the Malta M.I. to fortify and hold Lindley, the battalion arriving there on July 7th. It remained at Lindley for several weeks, mainly employed in escorting convoys.

We may leave the 2nd Battalion, then, for the present, and turn to another battalion of the Regiment. At the end of October 1899, when the country began to realise the extent of its task, the embodiment of eight battalions of Militia in the following January was authorised. Amongst these eight was the Herts Militia, which was embodied at Hertford on January 16th, 1900, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Viscount Cranborne, and was sent to Dublin, where it took over the details of the 2nd Battalion, and after sending out the draft already referred to under Captain H. I. Nicholl, which consisted of four officers and 130 other ranks, the whole battalion volunteered for active service and embarked for South Africa on February 27th from Queenstown, arriving at Cape Town on March 24th. It was at once sent up to Kimberley, and then moved nine miles further north to Dronfield, where it joined the 9th Brigade under Major-General Hutton. On March 30th it was sent up to Warrenton, where it occupied the southern bank of the Vaal, and during the remainder of the war it was employed in guarding the Kimberley-Fourteenstreams section of the railway. At the end of 1900 a section of M.I. was formed from the battalion, and this was increased in the following year to a company, which did good work with the columns first under Lord Methuen and afterwards under Lieut.-Colonel S. B. von Donop.\*

While the 2nd Battalion was in occupation of Lindley, a successful drive by a number of columns succeeded in pinning a large force of Boers under General Prinsloo

\* This company was commanded by Captain M. C. Norman, D.S.O., now the Rt. Hon. M. C. Norman, P.C., D.S.O., D.C.L., Governor of the Bank of England.

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against the Basuto border in the Wittebergen. This drive, in which the 6th M.I. took part (Captain H. I. Nicholl, the commander of the Bedfordshire Company, had just previously been severely wounded in a De Wet hunt), resulted in the surrender of Prinsloo with 4,000 men on July 30th, the most important success gained since Paardeberg. Hoping that this would lead, if promptly followed up, to the pacification of the Orange River Colony, Lord Roberts sent Lord Kitchener down to direct the movements of a number of columns with the object of capturing the elusive De Wet. The latter, finding his way back into the centre of the Orange River Colony closed, crossed the Vaal and broke into the Transvaal. Half the 2nd Battalion from Lindley joined General Hector Macdonald in this attempt, and while they were away, another body of Boers under Commandant Olivier, who had escaped westwards from the Wittebergen, attacked and surrounded a party of Imperial Yeomanry about nine miles north of Winburg. The Yeomanry succeeded in holding out until relieved by General Bruce Hamilton, and the headquarter companies of the 2nd Battalion, moving out promptly to support the Queenstown Volunteers, enabled the latter to capture Olivier and his three sons on August 26th.

The battalion then moved to Tabanchu, where it was under Colonel T. D. Pilcher, who had since the advance from Bloemfontein been leading Pilcher's M.I., but had returned to the battalion on promotion. In the Tabanchu district Pilcher organised a long chain of posts, the beginning of what later became the block-house system, and he raised from the battalion a company of M.I. which he kept for service with it. On this line the 2nd Bedfordshire remained until May 1901, the four companies detached to General Macdonald rejoining on December 8th, and it was generally successful in stopping Boer attempts to break through it until December 14th, 1900,

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when De Wet himself appeared at the head of from 3,000 to 4,000 Boers and forced his way across, but with the loss of a pom-pom, twelve waggons and a large quantity of ammunition.

While the 2nd Battalion was establishing itself on the Tabanchu line, the final stage of the main advance through the Transvaal had taken place. Prinsloo's surrender had relieved Sir Redvers Buller from the task of defending Natal, and in August he advanced into the Transvaal and effected a junction with Roberts' forces north-east of Pretoria. An advance was then made along the railway to Koomati Poort on the frontier of Portuguese East Africa, which was occupied on September 25th. On September 1st, Lord Roberts had issued a proclamation formally annexing the Transvaal, and by the end of that month every town of importance in the Transvaal and the Orange River Colony had been occupied. It was then generally assumed that the war was practically at an end. Sir Redvers Buller went home in October, and was followed by Lord Roberts, who had been appointed Commander-in-Chief at home. Roberts handed over his command to Kitchener, and reached England just in time to receive an earldom and the Garter from the dying Queen Victoria.

Soon after Lord Roberts' departure it was found that his estimate of the state of affairs had been optimistic. The Boers did not attach much importance to the towns, and encouraged by De Wet's success as a guerrilla they determined to make his policy general. The task of wearing down the resistance of brave, determined, well-mounted men in a vast country with which they were thoroughly familiar, proved to be formidable. It would be nearly as wearisome to describe in detail how this task was accomplished as was its performance. Kitchener's plan, the execution of which was complicated by the risings of Boers in the Cape Colony, was to quarter the

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country with a vast series of block-house lines held by the infantry, while the mounted troops, organised in a multitude of small columns, drove the Boers against these lines. The infantry had the dull tasks of holding the block-houses, or of acting as reserves to, or as escorts to the convoys of, the mounted columns, the latter duty involving much weary trekking up and down the country, while the fighting fell for the most part to the mounted troops.

We have seen that a beginning had been made in the autumn of 1900 with this system of blocking lines by Colonel T. D. Pilcher with the 2nd Battalion in the Tabanchu district. Pilcher had again left the battalion in October to take charge of a mobile column, the command of the battalion devolving on Major Hammond. In April 1901, the first volunteer service company went home, its place being taken by the 2nd Company which joined at Tabanchu. Early in May the battalion was relieved on the Tabanchu-Ladybrand line by the 2nd Royal Irish Rifles, and proceeded to extend that line westwards, holding a series of block-houses from Israel's Poort, seven miles west of Tabanchu, to Bosman's Kop, fourteen miles east of Bloemfontein, the headquarters being at Sanna's Post. There the bulk of the Battalion remained until the end of the war.

After De Wet's escape from the Wittebergen, the 6th M.I. had formed part of the forces which had followed him into the Western Transvaal, and when he broke back into the Orange River Colony they followed him, coming up on November 9th in time to take part in the rescue of Le Gallais' column in the action of November 9th in which Le Gallais was killed. Following this, De Wet planned an invasion of the Cape Colony, and sent two commandoes of Free Staters under Kritzinger and Hertzog across the Orange River to draw off our troops and open a way for him. Hertzog reached Britstown,

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where he was within reach of our great supply dépôt at De Aar junction, but fortunately he was headed off from that place by De Lisle's column, which included the 6th M.I., in a sharp action outside Britstown on December 12th, 1900.

De Wet's invasion of the Cape Colony was short and sharp ; it lasted only seventeen days, and early in 1901 he was back in the Free State, where during the first part of the year De Lisle's column was engaged with others in a series of drives. In May 1901, De Lisle went off to another column, handing over to Lieut.-Colonel Fanshawe, who worked with De Lisle's new command, and with other columns under the direction of General Elliot, their base being Kronstad. Elliot organised a drive from Kronstad through Harrismith to Vrede and then decided to return to Kronstad by way of Reitz and Lindley. The return march began on June 3rd, and the Boers were from the first active in their attentions to the rearguards. On the 5th some waggons were captured which were reported to belong to De La Rey, and the next morning Major Sladen was sent out with the Bedfordshire and Gordon Highlander companies of the 6th M.I. and 100 South Australian Bushmen to search for a Boer laager believed to be near Reitz. Sladen's party soon came upon the track of a Boer convoy, and as soon as the waggons were sighted, a dashing charge resulted in the capture of 114 waggons and carts and forty-five prisoners. Sladen then parked his booty and sent off sixty of the Australians to regain touch with De Lisle. Hardly had this party gone when Sladen found himself suddenly attacked by a body of Boers more than double his strength, who advanced upon him in a semi-circle. I turn to the "Official History of the War" for the events which followed :—

"Sladen's position lay on a spur, at the foot of which he had drawn up his captured wagons ; his men lined

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some scattered kraals above, in one of which were immured the prisoners. In a moment the enemy was at the wagons, and, dismounting there, some remained under cover, others ran forward to the shelter of the nearest native huts which Sladen had been unable to occupy. Then, whilst some of those behind secured and drove off the wagons, the rest of the Boers settled down to a fire attack at less than fifty yards range, which seemed likely to have but one end for the outnumbered and outflanked mounted infantry. Sladen had indeed fallen into a nest of hornets, and his prospects bad as they plainly were, were even less hopeful than they appeared. Behind him De Lisle, in total ignorance alike of his detachment's first success and its subsequent predicament, was being greatly delayed by a bad drift over the Wilge. Around him, even in his midst, lay a commando whose daring and promptitude bespoke no common leadership. Such was in fact the case. No lesser personages than De Wet and De La Rey led the attack, drawn to the spot by chances which will be described later. The wagons were already practically retaken, many were being fast removed, with the mass of the Boers between them and the troops. It seemed equally impossible to retain the prisoners, who lay in a hut within ten yards of the foremost of the attack, the escort consisting of but two men. Giving up for lost the wagons at any rate, Sladen's men turned stubbornly to keeping themselves from capture, and for four hours their rifles were neither silent nor ineffective. Meanwhile De Lisle had at last made the passage of the Wilge and, all unaware of the above events, was marching towards the spot. Not until 3 p.m., when yet six miles distant, did he receive a message from Sladen, learning more soon after from a fugitive who had been captured and released by the enemy. De Lisle at once pushed on and arrived on the scene at a gallop. He found Sladen's detachment

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still holding its own, despite the loss of a quarter of its numbers. By its indomitable resistance it had even gained the upper hand. The losses of the attack were heavy, the burghers were disinclined to close in further, and at the sight of the reinforcements they broke and fled, leaving twenty dead and wounded on the field. In the pursuit which followed De Lisle recaptured all but two of the wagons and 6,000 oxen. Altogether the enemy's losses—fifty killed and wounded, including two officers, and forty-five prisoners—nearly doubled those of the troops, which numbered three officers and twenty-three men killed and twenty-four officers and men wounded. The severity of the fire may be gauged by the fact that though somewhat covered by the kraals, nearly 150 horses were shot. The whole affair redounded greatly to the credit of all concerned, and especially, if distinctions can be made, to two young officers, Lieutenants C. P. Strong of the Bedfordshire Regiment, and G. E. Cameron of the Gordon Highlanders, who both fell in the forefront."

In addition to the loss of the gallant Strong, Captain Finlay, who commanded the company, was severely, and Lieutenant Wilmer mortally, wounded.

The one other engagement of importance in which a part of the Regiment was engaged was less fortunate. On September 18th, 1901, a Boer laager was discovered by patrols from a line of block-houses held by the 2nd Battalion at Vlakfontein, south of Sannah's Post. The next day two detachments of M.I., one of which was the headquarter M.I. company of the battalion, were sent out with a section of U Battery R.H.A., the battery which had been captured at Sannah's Post in March 1900, to raid the laager. The party was altogether too weak for its task, for the district was full of Boers waiting for a chance to break through the block-house line, and it ran into a force of the enemy many times its strength under Commander Ackermann, and was surrounded. After

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putting up a gallant fight for four hours the party surrendered, the prisoners including Lieut. G. D. Jebb, who had the misfortune to fall into the enemy's hands for the second time, and most of the headquarter M.I. company. At this time, Boers had no desire to be burdened with prisoners, and they released our men after stripping them of anything which would be of use to them, but they went off with guns. This was the one "regrettable incident" in which the battalion or its M.I. was concerned. While both the M.I. and the battalion had plenty of hard work before the final surrender of the Boers on May 31st, 1902, neither was concerned in any event of special interest during the last months of the war.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE GREAT WAR, 1914

THE South African War naturally interfered considerably with the normal tours of foreign service. The 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment came home from South Africa in 1903, and during the next five years was at home stations, when it embarked for Gibraltar. After two years on the Rock, it went to Bermuda and then returned to South Africa, and the outbreak of the Great War found it at Roberts Heights, Pretoria. Meantime, the 1st Battalion had come home from India, and on August 4th, 1914 was stationed at Mullingar. The South African War, like the Crimean War, produced a series of enquiries and commissions to examine the state and organisation of the Army, and these resulted in a crop of reforms. The Committee of Imperial Defence was set up to advise the Government on naval and military policy, the office of commander-in-chief was abolished, the control of the Army was vested in an Army Council, and a beginning was made with the creation of a General Staff. More drastic changes followed when Mr. (afterwards Lord) Haldane, became Secretary of State for War. He organised the troops at home into the divisions in which they would be mobilised at the outbreak of war, the first four of these being in England, the fifth and sixth in Ireland. The old organisation of the infantry battalions in eight companies was changed into one of four companies, the company commanders becoming mounted officers. Haldane cut down the Militia, and organised what remained into the Special Reserve,

the prime function of which was to supply drafts for the Regular Army. The Yeomanry and Volunteers became the Territorial Army, organised in fourteen mounted brigades, fourteen divisions and coast defence troops, the establishment of brigades and divisions being uniform with that of the Regular Army.

This brief outline of the Haldane reforms will explain the parts in the whole scheme taken by the battalions of the Regiment when war came. We with Germany were amongst the guarantors of the neutrality of Belgium, and when the German troops violated the frontier of Belgium, the British Government at 4 p.m. on August 4th, 1914, ordered a general mobilisation of the Regular Army, Special Reserve and Territorial Army. In pursuance of our entente with France, a plan had been prepared by our General Staff, in conjunction with the French General Staff, by which we were to send, subject to the approval of the Government, an expeditionary force to France to prolong the French left in the event of war with Germany. The British Government decided to keep two of the regular divisions at home until the Special Reserve and the Territorials could provide for home defence, and to send to France an expeditionary force of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 5th Divisions and a cavalry division under the command of Sir John French. The 1st Battalion under Lieut.-Colonel C. R. J. Griffith, D.S.O., therefore mobilised at Mullingar as part of the 15th Brigade, commanded by, Brig.-General Count Gleichen, which brigade was in Major-General Sir Charles Ferguson's 5th Division. The 3rd and 5th Divisions formed the 2nd Army Corps, which went to France under Lieut.-General Sir James Grierson, but he died on his way to the front, and the Corps came under General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien on the eve of the battle of Mons. The 3rd and 4th Battalions on mobilisation became part of the Harwich Defence Force, in addition to their function of finding

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drafts for the regular battalions. The 3rd Battalion had been embodied in the South African War under the command of the Duke of Bedford, and was quartered at Colchester, whence it sent out a number of drafts to the 2nd Battalion. In 1908 the Duke of Bedford had been succeeded by Lord Ampthill,\* who in August 1914 took it to Felixstowe, the 4th Battalion being stationed nearby at Dovercourt. Under the scheme prepared by our general staff, arrangements had been made for the mobilisation of a 7th Division, made up mainly of the regular units in the Mediterranean and South Africa, and on August 10th the 2nd Battalion mobilised at Roberts Heights and embarked for England to join the remainder of its division. The doings of the Territorial and New Army battalions of the Regiment will be dealt with later, and leaving the other parts of the Regiment preparing to take their part in the great struggle, we return to the 1st Battalion, which as part of the original expeditionary force was the first to come into action.

The 1st Battalion landed at Havre on August 16th. Two days later it arrived by train at Le Cateau and marched thence to its place of concentration behind the Fortress of Maubeuge. On August 20th, Sir John French considered his concentration to be sufficiently complete, and the next morning he began his advance towards Mons, with the 5th Division on his left flank. On the 22nd, the 1st Battalion passed in its march a little to the west of the field of Malplaquet and halted that night at Bois de Bossu, which in the days when it was a real wood and not merged, as in August 1914, in a congeries of mining villages, Withers with The 16th Foot had skirted on September 11th, 1709, on his march to outflank Villars at Malplaquet.

Sir John French's intention had been that the 2nd Corps should advance on the 23rd over the Canal de

\* Now Colonel, 3rd Militia Battalion.

Condé, which runs due west from Mons across the front held by the 5th Division, but on the night of the 22nd, he got news that the French 5th Army on our right were being pressed back, and to cover its flank he decided to fight defensively on the line of the canal, with the 1st Corps écheloned back on the right of the 2nd, and the cavalry covering the left flank. During the battle of Mons on August 23rd, the brunt of the fighting was borne by the 3rd Division which was on the right of the 5th, and the 15th Brigade being in divisional reserve on that day, the 1st Battalion was but lightly engaged. Two of its companies were employed in entrenching a position near Wasmes, and there early in the afternoon came under heavy shell fire. About 5 p.m. they stopped an attempt by German infantry to advance, and a little later in the evening the other two were moved off to their right to Paturages Station to assist in filling a gap which had occurred between the 5th and 3rd Divisions during the withdrawal of the latter from the town of Mons and the canal. The night was spent in entrenching and preparing houses for defence, but the enemy made no attack. Late that night Sir John French learned the strength of von Kluck's First German Army with which he was engaged, and also that the French 5th Army on his right had been for many hours in full retreat. He at once ordered his army to fall back to the line Valenciennes-Maubeuge. At dawn on the 24th, the Germans began a heavy bombardment of the position held by the 1st Battalion at Paturages. The bombardment lasted some four hours, and was followed by an infantry attack which was repulsed. It would seem that the enemy's intention was to hold our troops at Frameries and Paturages, while a turning movement was made round the left of the 5th Division. This turning movement was checked by the flank guard action at Elouges, and while that action was being fought, the 1st Battalion and the remainder of the

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15th Brigade were skilfully withdrawn from its isolated position, after some sharp fighting to the neighbourhood of Bavai. It was at Paturages that a drum belonging to the battalion was left in the house of Mme. Chanoine. That lady preserved the drum throughout the war, and restored it to the 1st Battalion after our reoccupation of Mons in 1918 through Brig.-General H. C. Jackson,\* who presented her with a replica. The drum was used at the battalion's trooping of the colour at Namur early in 1919.

On the 25th, a long and hot march brought the 2nd Corps to the Le Cateau position, where it was joined by the 4th Division, which had just arrived from England. Sir John French at first intended to stand and fight at Le Cateau, but finding that the enemy's turning movement was developing rapidly and in great strength, he ordered the retreat to be continued. Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, however, found that many of his troops had not come in at a very late hour, and that the enemy was very close up. Preferring to fight on a selected position to fighting a series of rearguard actions with weary troops, he determined to stand, and so at dawn on August 26th began the battle of Le Cateau. In that battle the 15th Brigade held the front on the left of the 5th Division from Troisville to Inchy, which was held by the 3rd Division, the 1st Battalion being in trenches close to Troisville on the right of the brigade. Here it was subjected to a very heavy bombardment, but no infantry attack was made on this part of the front, for as at Mons the Germans were trying to get round our flanks. By 2 p.m. the pressure on the right flank of the 5th Division, which was enfiladed by the German guns, had become severe, and orders to retire were issued. It was some time before these orders reached the battalions, and by then the Germans had got a number of machine guns

\* Now Major-General H. C. Jackson, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

close up to the front of the 1st Battalion, so that it was fortunate in getting away with little loss.

Von Kluck believed that we were based on Calais and Boulogne. Our main base was in fact, Havre, and arrangements had already been begun for transferring it to St. Nazaire on the Atlantic coast of France. Hoping to cut us off from what he believed to be our bases, von Kluck moved after the battle of Le Cateau by his right, and partly because of this and partly owing to the losses which the Germans had suffered in the battle, there was no direct and energetic pursuit of the 2nd Corps. Nevertheless hard marching was needed to enable that corps to avoid envelopment, and effect a junction with the 1st Corps, which on the 25th had become separated from it by having to march east of the Forest of Mormal. So in the forty-eight hours from the beginning of the withdrawal from Troisville, the 1st Battalion, marching by day and night with only brief halts, covered sixty-one miles to the Oise near Noyon. No one had had more than a few hours' continuous sleep since the night of the 22nd, and by day there was a blazing August sun. The ranks were full of reservists, and naturally in the circumstances there were many stragglers. Indeed, G.H.Q. issued an order that baggage was to be jettisoned and the waggons used to carry exhausted officers and men. The 1st Battalion had no occasion to avail itself of this privilege, and very few men fell out during those strenuous days. Even allowing for the fact that the battalion got off lightly at Mons and Le Cateau, its marching record during the retreat was magnificent, for from August 24th to September 6th it had only thirty stragglers.

After the Oise was crossed on August 28th, the pressure relaxed, marches were shorter, and on August 29th the battalion had its first chance of a wash and real sleep since August 23rd. On September 3rd the battalion crossed the Marne, and on the 5th its long retreat came

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to an end at Tournan, some twenty miles east-south-east of Paris. The next morning everyone was electrified by the news that we were to turn north and advance. The reasons for the advance were as mysterious to us as those for the retreat had been. No one then knew that Maunoury's advance with the 6th French Army from the defences of Paris had compelled von Kluck to withdraw troops from our front to cover his right flank and rear, and that we were marching into a gap held mainly by German cavalry and Jägers. On September 7th the battalion crossed the Grand Morin west of Coulommiers, and on the 8th at the crossing of the Petit Morin, Lieutenant A. G. Corah (later Captain A. G. Corah) with some twenty cyclists of the divisional cyclist company, cut off 200 men of the Guard Schützen who were trying to escape from our artillery fire, and compelled them to lay down their arms. Unfortunately a battery of the 3rd Division peppered both captors and captured so energetically with shrapnel that all save seventy of the latter escaped.

Early on the morning of September 9th the 5th Division crossed the Marne at Saacy, where the bridge was found intact, the 14th Brigade leading, and advanced on Montreuil through thick woods. On emerging from these, the brigade came under heavy rifle and artillery fire. This was from Kræwel's composite brigade, which had been hastily assembled to oppose our advance. The 14th Brigade being held up, the two leading battalions of the 15th Brigade, the Norfolks and Dorsets, were sent to support it, but as they too could make no progress, the remaining two battalions of the 15th Brigade, the 1st Bedfordshire and 1st Cheshire, were ordered up late in the afternoon, the 1st Bedfordshire towards Bezu. Here on emerging from a wood, the battalion came under heavy artillery fire. Towards dusk, Major E. I. de S. Thorpe located the guns which had been holding up the

advance, and reported that he could rush them if supported, but as it was getting dark and the situation was uncertain, the brigadier stopped the advance. At the end of the battle of the Marne, rain came down in torrents, and the battalion passed the night of 9th-10th September in a very wet bivouac, while the German 1st and 2nd Armies were in full retreat to the Aisne.

The advance from the Marne to the Aisne was, for the battalion, without incident, and on the evening of the 12th September, it was on the south bank of the Aisne between Venizel and Missy, and bivouacked, again in pouring rain, at Ferme dé l'Epitaphe. In the early hours of September 13th, the 11th Brigade of the 4th Division had seized the bridge at Venizel on the left of the 5th Division, and crossing the Aisne had established itself at the foot of the heights on the far side of the river ; away on the far right the leading troops of the 1st Corps had crossed the river with little opposition. In the centre the 3rd Division, on the right of the 5th, had obtained a footing on the far bank at Vailly. In the 5th Division, the leading battalion of the 13th Brigade, the West Kents, was unable, owing to machine gun and artillery fire from the Chivres spur, to get over till dark, but the 14th Brigade had about noon got across at Moulin des Roches, one mile east of Venizel, and moved up to the heights about Ste Marguerite. Such was the situation at dusk on September 13th when the 15th Brigade was ordered to cross at Moulin des Roches and advance with the 14th Brigade on the Chivres spur, which ending in the fort de Condé, dominates this portion of the Aisne Valley.

The Chivres spur and Condé fort were the key of the German position, and were strongly held, being occupied by the 5th Division of the 3rd German Corps, supported by artillery. It had been supposed that the Germans would continue their retreat, and no arrangement had been made for a concerted attack on both sides of the

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spur. The task of the 15th Brigade was therefore an impossible one, the more so as our 5th Division had lost a number of guns at Le Cateau which had not been replaced, and the artillery support of the attack was not adequate. How gallantly the 1st Battalion tried to do the impossible is told in the Official History : “ The left centre of the 14th Infantry Brigade, having been absolutely stopped by the frontal fire from the enemy’s trenches on the western side of the spur and by the flanking fire from the Chivres Valley, the new attack was made up the spur from the south ; ten companies (including the two already on the spur)—three from the Norfolks, four from the Bedfords, of the 15th Infantry Brigade, and three from the East Surreys of the 14th Infantry Brigade, with supports from the Cheshire and Cornwall Light Infantry—were detailed for it. As they advanced northwards up the hill, the woods were found to be held by the enemy with an organised system of trenches protected by wire-netting and fencing. The companies of the Bedfords and East Surreys, on the left, were the first to enter the woods ; and they pressed on steadily, shooting down a good many Germans and making headway by sheer superiority of marksmanship. In fact on the left of the attack all seemed to be going well.

“ But on the right it was otherwise. Whether, in view of the failing light, insufficient time had been allowed for the various units to reach their several starting points, or because the wire-netting in the woods caused them to converge, it is difficult to say, it is only certain that—in spite of all precautions, some companies lost direction, and that the right tended to close in on the centre, where the crowding and confusion became so great that few could tell in which direction they should fire, whilst both British and German guns shelled the woods. The inevitable result soon followed. Confused advance gave way to confused retirement ; the Brigadier Count

Gleichen, the senior officer on the spot, decided to abandon the attack, called back his companies and broke off the fight.

"Three companies of the East Surreys and a company of the Bedfordshire, however, stuck to the ground which they had gained within seventy yards of the German trenches. They were still striving to push forward until, between 6 and 7 p.m. they received orders to fall back."

In this attack Captains C. H. Ker and R. J. McCloughlin were killed, Major C. C. Onslow \* and Lieutenants J. H. Mayne and H. Courtenay were wounded. After dark the battalion entrenched itself on the railway embankment near Missy. A further attempt to take the Chivres spur was made next morning, the 1st Battalion being in support to the Norfolks, but no progress was made, and that night the 15th Brigade was relieved by the 14th and brought back to the south bank of the river. For the next eight days the battalion was employed in extending and holding posts in the direction of Condé Bridge, which the Germans held, and on September 24th it re-crossed the Aisne and held Chivres Wood. Here it had its first experience of trench warfare, then of a somewhat elementary type. On the night of October 1st-2nd it was relieved, and with the remainder of the 2nd Corps marched by night, to avoid aircraft observation, through the forest of Villers Cottérêts to Pont St. Maxence, where it entrained for Abbeville. This was the beginning of the transfer of the British Army to Flanders, a development of what is known as the "race to the sea," in which each side was attempting to outflank the northern flank of the other. On October 9th, the 2nd Corps marched from the neighbourhood of Abbeville towards Béthune again by night, covered on its left by our own and the French cavalry. East of Béthune in the direction of La Bassée, the left of the French infantry was engaged

\* Now Brig.-General C. C. Onslow, C.B., C.M.G., C.B.E., D.S.O.

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with the right of the German infantry. Further north both sides had large bodies of cavalry, and both were rapidly moving up infantry behind the cavalry screens. Those movements developed into the great battle which extended from La Bassée through Armentières and Ypres to the sea, the battle which completed the work begun at the battle of the Marne, and put an end to Germany's hopes of obtaining an early decision in the west. We may leave the 1st Battalion completing in fine October weather, a pleasant change after the mud of Chivres Wood, its marches to Béthune, and turn to the 2nd Battalion.

On the arrival of the 2nd Battalion in England from South Africa, it went to the New Forest, joining the 21st Brigade commanded by Brig.-General H. Watts of the 7th Division under Major-General Capper. There was some delay in completing the artillery of the division, but early in October it was ready. By then the Germans had determined that, as a prelude to their attempt to get round the Allied left to the channel ports, Antwerp must be captured, and they began a serious attack on the Belgian fortress on September 27th. The British Government decided to send help to the Belgian Army in Antwerp, and in the first week of October, the Royal Naval Division arrived there to support the Belgian Army. At the same time a relief force was organised under Lieut.-General Sir H. Rawlinson, composed of the 7th Division, and the 3rd Cavalry Division under General Byng. The 7th Division disembarked at Zeebrugge and Ostend, the 2nd Battalion landing in the early hours of October 7th, commanded by Major J. M. Traill (Lieut.-Colonel H. W. U. Coates, D.S.O., being sick), and going on at once to Bruges. The other two brigades of the 7th Division were sent to Ghent, while the 21st Brigade was sent towards Ostend to cover the disembarkation of the 3rd Cavalry Division at that port. By the time when Sir H.

Rawlinson's command was concentrated Antwerp had fallen, and its function then became to cover the flank of the retreating Belgian Army. The 7th Division, marching by Wyngene and Roulers, reached Ypres on October 14th. That evening as the billeting party of the battalion was engaged in chalking the orders of houses, a party of Uhlans suddenly appeared, and being driven off by the party under the Quartermaster, were then rounded up and captured by the 10th Hussars. By that time our Cavalry Corps and the 2nd and 3rd Corps had arrived in Flanders from the Aisne and seemed to be making good progress, and with the idea that we were still in time to outflank the German right, Rawlinson's command was ordered to advance from Ypres on Menin. Rawlinson, justly anxious about his left flank, advanced cautiously and was soon in touch with patrols of the German 19th Corps from Menin. On October 18th, the 21st Brigade deployed and advanced between Becleraere and Gheluvelt, and there the 2nd Battalion fired its first shots in the first battle of Ypres. The enemy was slowly pushed back, and at the end of the day the battalion dug itself in on the right of the 21st Brigade, with its right on the tenth kilometre stone of the Ypres-Menin road,\* the 20th Brigade carrying on the line south of the road. This was the furthest point definitely occupied by us in the Ypres salient until the final advance in 1918, and from this line the 7th Division disputing every yard of the way was slowly pushed back through Gheluvelt by weight of numbers.

On October 19th the head of our 1st Corps began to arrive at Ypres, but the Germans countered this reinforcement by bringing up four newly created army corps of which the 27th Reserve Corps supported by the 30th Division of the 15th Corps attacked Capper's 7th Division. Haig's advance with the 1st Corps on Capper's left at first

\* *I.e.*, about three kilometres east-south-east of Gheluvelt.

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made some progress, but on October 21st it was stopped by superior numbers. By that date our 2nd and 3rd Corps were engaged between La Bassée and the Lys, north of Armentières, with Prince Ruprecht's 6th Army, Allenby's cavalry on the Messines Ridge was being attacked by two German cavalry corps, while the four German corps reinforced by artillery from Antwerp and by the left of Ruprecht's army, attacked Haig's corps, Capper's division and Byng's cavalry division.

The heroic stand of the 7th Division has been described in detail, and that the 2nd Battalion had taken its full share in that stand is shown by the fact that on October 31st, after the crisis of the battle was over, of the twenty-nine officers and 900 men who had marched into Ypres on October 14th, only Captain C. C. Foss,\* the adjutant, Lieutenant S. D. Mills,† the transport officer, and Captain H. M. Cressingham, D.C.M.,‡ the Quartermaster, with some 350 rank and file were left. Major J. M. Traill, the commanding officer, Major R. P. Stares, the second in command, Captain E. H. Lyddon and Lieutenant W. C. Anderson had been killed on October 31st. On November 5th the remnant of the 7th Division was relieved by a composite division of the 2nd Corps, and during that relief the 1st Battalion met what was left of the 2nd. To see how this came about we must go back to the 1st Battalion, which we left marching to Béthune.

On October 12th the 1st battalion relieved French troops, who had been holding Givenchy by the skin of their teeth, and was at once heavily engaged. The next day, after a sharp bombardment, the Germans launched an infantry attack on the front of the 15th Brigade north of the La Bassée canal. The 1st Battalion was ordered to

\* Now Lieut.-Colonel C. C. Foss, V.C., D.S.O., commanding 2nd Battalion The King's Regiment.

† Now Major S. D. Mills, M.C.

‡ Now Lieut.-Colonel H. M. Cressingham, D.S.O., D.C.M.

fall back to cover Festubert, and the enemy's advance was stopped on the line between Festubert and the canal, which then formed the boundary between us and the French. While the 5th Division was engaged on the La Bassée front, the 3rd Division on its left had driven back the German cavalry opposed to it through Neuve Chapelle, and the Germans detached troops from the front of the 5th Division to succour their right flank. This gave the 15th Brigade an opportunity, and on October 16th the 1st Battalion carried Givenchy in a dashing attack, taking a number of prisoners and recovering several of our wounded of the action of October 13th. Givenchy remained a pivot of the defence of this part of our line until we advanced in 1918. Simultaneously, the left of the 15th Brigade captured Violaines just north-west of La Bassée, and the 3rd Division advancing beyond Neuve Chapelle, captured the Aubers Ridge and the village of Herlies on the La Bassée-Lille Road. This was the high water mark of the advance of the 2nd Corps, for Ruprecht deploying successively his 7th and 15th Corps, began a series of fierce attacks. On October 23rd the Germans drove the Cheshire and B Company of the 1st Battalion out of Violaines, only a few of B Company escaping. The rest of the battalion was then relieved at Givenchy by the Devons, and was employed in an attempt to retake Violaines, which failed. Hardly had the line been established covering Festubert, which the Germans were shelling heavily, when news arrived that the 3rd Division had been driven out of Neuve Chapelle, and that reinforcements were urgently needed in that quarter. Two companies of the 1st Battalion were then relieved by the Manchesters, and under Major W. Allason\* were sent round to Richbourg l'Avoué, where Allason found himself in command of detachments of the Dorsets, Cheshires and the Duke of Cornwall's, and was

\* Now Brigadier-General W. Allason, D.S.O.

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directed to assist in a counter-attack on Neuve Chapelle, which was wisely postponed. The next morning, October 27th, Colonel Maude, afterwards Lieut.-General Sir Stanley Maude, arrived and took command of Allason's scratch brigade. The counter-attack of which Maude's command formed the right was made on October 28th, and succeeded in getting into Neuve Chapelle, but was driven out again. During the attack, a platoon of the 1st Battalion surrounded the house at the road junction just south of Neuve Chapelle, afterwards known as Port Arthur, and Private Goodman and another man of the Regiment, both of whom were awarded the D.C.M., managed to set the house on fire and drive the Germans out. The counter-attack put a stop to the German offensive in this quarter, and the line was established from Port Arthur round Neuve Chapelle, which was held until the village was recaptured in the battle of March 1915.

Meanwhile the Indian Corps had landed in France and moved up behind the 2nd Corps, which it relieved at the end of October, the Seaforths taking over from Allason's men. But a fresh crisis developed on the Messines Ridge, where our cavalry was hard pressed, and Allason and his two companies, joined on the way by a welcome draft of 113 men under Captain F. H. Edwards, went up to Neuve Eglise to support De Lisle's cavalry brigade. By the time when they had arrived there, French reinforcements had come to the help of the cavalry, and Allason was sent round to Ypres. The remaining two companies under Lieut.-Colonel C. R. J. Griffith had, while Allason's men were fighting at Neuve Chapelle, passed some strenuous days in helping the Indian Corps to establish itself in the line, and on November 6th they too set out for Ypres.

During the transfer of our expeditionary force from the Aisne to Flanders, the French had placed at our disposal

some Paris buses to expedite the movement of our infantry. This caused our authorities to send out London buses for a like purpose, and one of the first uses to which they were put was to move the headquarters and two companies of the 1st Battalion up to Ypres. In the early hours of November 6th, while Allason and his men were settling into the line at Ypres, the remnant of the 2nd Battalion had marched a weary seventeen miles from Ypres to Loker, and, arriving there at 7.30 a.m., they had after a meal settled down to a well earned sleep, when they were aroused by the lumbering entry into the village of a column of buses with Lieut.-Colonel C. R. J. Griffith and half the 1st Battalion on board. Thus a dramatic meeting of the two battalions took place under the shadow of Mount Kemmel. They had last met in 1870 at the Curragh in very different circumstances. But if the task of the 2nd Battalion in stemming the German rush for the Channel ports was over, that of the 1st Battalion was not yet completed, and after a brief exchange of greetings, Griffith and his men went on to the Salient. There not only the 1st Battalion but the greater part of the 15th Brigade under Count Gleichen was once more united, and held the line south of the Menin Road in front of Herentage Chateau, the 1st Battalion having the sector immediately south of the road. Here it withstood and helped to beat off a heavy German attack on November 7th, and after enduring four days' constant shelling, had the distinction of taking a notable part in the repulse of the Prussian Guard attack of November 11th, and a renewed attempt by the Guard three days later. This was the last big effort of the Germans to break through to Calais. The 15th Brigade was relieved by French troops on November 22nd, and moved to Loker for a short and well earned rest. By then only Lieut.-Colonel C. R. J. Griffith \* and Lieutenant S. A. Gledstanes (afterwards

\* Now Brig.-General C. R. J. Griffith, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

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Captain S. A. Gledstanes) of the officers who landed at Havre on August 16th had not been hit.

By the end of November the 5th Division relieved the French on the Messines front, and the 1st Battalion took its place in the line there until the end of the year. The 7th Division went into the line in the middle of November in the section south of Armentières, and the 2nd Battalion held the trenches round the ruined convent near Fleurbaix. In these positions the two battalions passed the first Christmas of the war.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE GREAT WAR, 1915

THE winter of 1914-15 was for the infantry in the line the most miserable of any throughout the war. The weather was exceptionally wet even for Flanders, and in the low ground through which most of our front line ran, water was found a foot below the surface. We lacked all the appliances of trench warfare, were short of sandbags and wire, and woefully deficient in ammunitions of all kinds. By night the enemy's lights made a pyrotechnic display worthy of the Crystal Palace, while with us a company which possessed one Very light pistol was fortunate. By day our artillery was limited in order to economise for contingencies to two rounds per gun per day, but the Germans had sufficient to inflict at least a couple of "strafes" per day upon such points as they thought worth shelling. Worst of all, owing to lack of sandbags and drainage material, the front line trenches were little better than mud holes, the parapets were constantly washed away by the rain, and the communication trenches, to give them a courtesy title, were streams of mud. All stores and supplies for the front lines had to be taken up by night, which involved very severe labour on the fatigue parties. Colonel W. Allason, in his account of the doings of the 1st Battalion on the Messines front during this period, says :

"A shallow trench once dug had to be occupied, whether half full of water or not, continuous occupation being the rule, since there was no relief. Practically every man suffered from trench feet in some degree. When

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the battalion was relieved and the men were told to take off their boots, their feet swelled to such an extent that they were quite unable to get their boots on again, and they hobbled through the mud to hospital, their feet tied up in puttees." The 2nd Battalion, in the Fleurbaix section, was more fortunate than the 1st in that the enemy's artillery was less active, otherwise its experiences were very similar. Yet the quality of the men was such that in those depressing conditions they never lost their spirit, and were ready for action as soon as the ground made movement on the surface at all possible.

The first call for action came to the 2nd Battalion. The French Commander-in-Chief, Joffre, had planned a general offensive in the north for the spring, and pressed us to co-operate to the full extent of our resources. Owing to the arrival of reinforcements, our army in France had been organised into two armies, under Sir Douglas Haig and Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, and as a preliminary to the general offensive, the First Army was ordered to attack the German lines about Neuve Chapelle. The attack was made by the Indian and 4th Corps of the First Army. Capper's 7th Division was in the 4th Corps, and in order to enable it to prepare for the battle, it was relieved early in March by the Canadian Division, the 2nd Battalion moving to Estaires and thence to Laventie, whence on March 10th it advanced to the attack. The assault was delivered after a short and intense bombardment, and in the centre was quickly successful. The village of Neuve Chapelle was carried and a line established in front of it, but on both flanks our progress was held up by nests of machine guns. The general line of advance of the 7th Division was ordered to be by the Moated Grange on Mauquissart, about three-quarters of a mile north of Neuve Chapelle, and by the evening of the 10th, the 21st Brigade was established about midway between those two places, and there it was ordered to

wait until the 8th Division on its right could get on. So throughout the 10th and 11th March, the 2nd Battalion under Major C. C. Onslow had the trying duty of remaining in brigade reserve under heavy shelling behind the 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers, who were in the front line some 500 yards west of Mauquissart. Early on the morning of the 12th March, the Germans launched a strong counter-attack from Mauquissart under cover of a heavy mist, and rushed a trench occupied by the Royal Scots Fusiliers. Major W. H. Denne, second in command of the 2nd Battalion, who was nearest to the spot, promptly organised a counter-attack with A Company, and just as he was advancing he fell mortally wounded, dying two years later. The attack was carried on by Captains C. B. Cumberlege and J. H. G. Baird, and Baird with six men actually got into the trench, but every officer and man who took part in the action was either killed or wounded, most of them by machine gun fire. General Watts, on hearing of the failure of the attack, gave orders that the trench must be taken, and Captain Foss, the adjutant, led a party of men of what was then called a grenade section, supported by a platoon of B Company from a trench held by the Northamptons, and taking the enemy in flank, captured the trench and took one officer and forty-eight men prisoners. The trench was then occupied and consolidated by the support of A Company, which had not taken part in the attack. For this gallant and prompt action, Captain C. C. Foss, who had won the D.S.O. for his conduct in the first battle of Ypres, was awarded the V.C., Private W. Eade of the bombers, the D.C.M. and the Russian Cross of St. George, Major W. H. Denne and Captain C. B. Cumberlege,\* the D.S.O., and Captain J. H. G. Baird the M.C.

General Capper was not one who was profuse with

\* Now Lieut.-Colonel C. B. Cumberlege, D.S.O., O.B.E.

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compliments, and the following divisional order which he issued after the battle therefore means much :—

“ The Divisional General has now received the reports on the action near Neuve Chapelle on March 10th and 11th. He desires to express his appreciation of the steady conduct of the 2nd Bedfordshire Regiment, and particularly of the gallant action of Major W. H. Denne and his small party who made a devoted counter-attack on the enemy in order to assist a neighbouring battalion. The Divisional General also wishes to record his admiration of the conduct of Captain C. C. Foss, D.S.O., and his few grenade throwers, who succeeded in an attack on the enemy, capturing 50 prisoners. The Divisional General much regrets the losses sustained by the battalion.”

Those losses amounted to 8 officers wounded, 33 rank and file killed, and 144 wounded. On March 15th the Battalion was relieved and went into billets near Laventie.

By the spring of 1915 our original expeditionary force of 4 divisions and a cavalry division had grown to 16 divisions and 5 cavalry divisions, and as successive reinforcements arrived, we gradually extended our left up into the Ypres salient so that our line extended from the La Bassée canal to near Langemarck. The French divisions which we relieved went south to prepare for Foch’s attack in Artois, and this process of relief involved a gradual sidestepping of our divisions northwards. Early in March, the 28th Division, the last of our regular divisions to reach the western front until the 29th arrived from Egypt, was holding the line from St. Eloi to a point just beyond the Ypres-Amiens railway opposite Hill 60, and on March 3rd the 1st Battalion went north from the Messines front to reinforce the 28th Division. It spent a fortnight in the line near the Bluff south of the railway, and then after a rest returned to the line in front of Sanctuary Wood, the 28th Division having extended its front northwards. Early in April the 5th Division moved

north to the St. Eloi-Hill 60 line, and the 1st Battalion rejoined the 15th Brigade, then commanded by Brig.-General Northey, and went into the line opposite Hill 60. This so-called hill was an artificial mound of earth excavated from the railway cutting close by. This mound was on the crest of the southern portion of the Ypres ridge, and gave the enemy good observation towards Zillebeke and Ypres. It was therefore of great tactical importance. The 28th Division had begun mining operations against Hill 60, and these were continued by the 5th Division. On the night of April 16th-17th, the 13th Brigade relieved the 15th, and on the next evening, after we had exploded three mines, the 13th Brigade assaulted and carried the hill. The task of holding it proved a stiff one. The Germans turned as many guns as they could bring to bear on the hill, and launched three fierce counter-attacks against it, the last of which gave them a footing. From this they were driven out late on April 18th by a counter-attack of the 13th Brigade, and that night the exhausted 13th Brigade was relieved by the 15th Brigade with the East Surreys of the 14th Brigade attached. The 1st Battalion and the East Surreys took over the front line on the hill, and until the 19th had to endure very heavy shelling. On the 20th, the Germans in the forenoon made a series of bombing attacks which were repulsed, and on this day the battalion had its first experience of flame-throwers. About 2 p.m. the enemy began a heavy bombardment which lasted four hours and was followed by two attacks at 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. By this time every semblance of a trench had disappeared, and the hill was little more than a rubbish heap thickly strewn with British and German dead. In these circumstances it was impossible to have any organised control of the defence, and that the enemy were beaten off and the hill held was due to the gallantry and initiative of the officers and men of the 1st Battalion and the East Surreys.

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The 1st Battalion in its defence of Hill 60, lost 421 killed and wounded. The officers killed were Lieutenants E. L. Kellie, C. S. Kirch, Knight,\* Harvey\* and Webb,\* and those wounded, Major W. Allason, Captain R. E. Moyse, Lieutenants F. W. Ogilvie, Kennedy, Cannon and J. T. D. Darbshire. As a specimen of stubborn gallantry this defence of Hill 60 is worthy to rank with the performances of the Regiment in the first battle of Ypres.

Hardly had the 1st Battalion been relieved on Hill 60 and withdrawn into reserve when on April 22nd the Germans made their first gas attack, as to which rumours had been rife, against the French on the northern flank of the salient. The French broke before the waves of gas, and we were left in a very critical situation. So the 1st Battalion instead of getting a rest was kept constantly on the alert, but it was not called to the front till May 1st, when the enemy launched a gas attack on Hill 60. The hill was then held by the Dorsets, most of whom were gassed, but a gallant remnant stuck to their trench, and the 1st Battalion went promptly to the rescue, as did the Devons. Captain S. A. Gledstanes of the 1st Battalion, on his own initiative led a party of the Bedfordshire through the gas, against which they then had no proper protection, and reached the trenches before the Germans could get to them. As the Official History says, "the forbidden weapon had been faced and defeated for the first time." Private Warner of the 1st Battalion was awarded the V.C. this day. Though already gassed, he on his own initiative entered and held a portion of a deserted trench in which the gas was thickest until he collapsed. Unfortunately this gallant soldier never recovered from the effects of the poison. After this episode the 1st Battalion went into the line just north of Hill 60, where it was on the right of the new line to which we had withdrawn in the salient. On May 5th the enemy made

\* Officers attached to 1st Battalion.

yet another gas attack, and while the 1st Battalion held its line, the troops on its right were driven from Hill 60. As we had already had very heavy losses and expended much of our scanty stock of shell in the second battle of Ypres, and as we were about to co-operate with the French in their offensive, it was decided to make no further attempt to recover Hill 60, and the battle gradually petered out.

While the 1st Battalion was fighting on Hill 60, the 2nd Battalion was alternately taking its turn in the line of the 7th Division, and training under the command of Major J. Mackenzie, V.C., for its part in the offensive which our First Army was to carry out in conjunction with Foch's advance towards the Vimy Ridge. In mid-April, Sir Thompson Capper was wounded while watching some bomb trials, and to the regret of all ranks of the Division had to go home. His place was taken by Major-General Hubert Gough.\* The attack of the First Army started against the Aubers Ridge on May 9th and failed, mainly because we had not sufficient guns and shells to batter down the German trenches and wire, and overcome their machine guns. Sir Douglas Haig then stopped the attack, and as the 21st Brigade was in reserve it did not come into action. Sir John French in response to Foch's request for activity on our front, then decided on a renewed effort further south on the Festubert-Givenchy front. So the 7th Division moved south, and during the first phase of the battle of Festubert, from May 14th to 17th, the 21st Brigade was again in reserve, the 2nd Battalion being employed in providing covering fire. On May 17th it was ordered up to take part in an attack with the Camerons on the German trenches east of La Quinque Rue. The battalion, again under Major C. C. Onslow, started at 7.30 p.m. for a night attack over ground which there had been no time to reconnoitre. The line of advance was intersected by deep wet ditches, while besides

\* Now General Sir Hubert Gough, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., K.C.V.O.

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all these difficulties, which made it impossible to keep direction, the artillery support was inadequate. Naturally, then, the attack failed. As General Watts said afterwards to the battalion : "The attack was carried out in a most gallant and determined manner, and its non-success was caused by the usual chances of war, which did not allow of a proper artillery preparation or a thorough reconnaissance." In this action the battalion lost Major J. Mackenzie, V.C., and Captain W. Hutton Williams (East Surrey Regiment, attached 2nd Battalion) killed, 9 officers wounded, of whom Captain H. E. Huntress and Lieutenant A. E. Kuhn died of wounds, 45 rank and file killed, 276 wounded and 68 missing, or nearly 50 per cent. of its strength. The battalion was relieved on May 19th, and after a fortnight's rest was moved down to its old front near Béthune to take part with the rest of the 7th Division in an attack on the German trenches between Givenchy and Violaines.

At this period we never had sufficient guns and shell to give an infantry attack on the German trenches a fair chance of success. The weather being comparatively dry, the Germans were able to dig, and their spades beat our munition factories, but as Foch was continuing his slow and costly progress towards Vimy Ridge, and was urging us to keep the Germans occupied, Sir John French felt that we were bound to do what we could. The fighting at Givenchy from June 15th to 17th produced no results. The ground about Givenchy was peculiarly intricate and defensible, and at no time during the war, until our final advance in 1918, did either we or the Germans make any progress there. The attacks of the 7th Division all failed, the 2nd Battalion losing 5 officers and 18 other ranks killed, 2 officers and 117 other ranks wounded and 27 missing. The battalion remained on the Givenchy front until mid-September, when it moved south to take part in the battle of Loos.

Meanwhile the 1st Battalion had been in the line at Hill 60, which continued to be a most unhealthy spot, being both a shell trap and a centre of mining activity. Though there were no attacks, losses were constant, and during its last tour on the hill, the battalion had seventy-one casualties. It went into reserve at Reninghelst on July 13th, and there the men had their first chance of a wash and clean up since April 10th. During the late spring and early summer, a steady stream of new army and territorial divisions had been pouring into France. This enabled us to form a third army under Sir Charles Monro, which took over a front north of the Somme on either side of Albert, the French Army which we relieved going south to join the troops preparing for Joffre's autumn campaign. The creation of the Third Army involved the reorganisation of divisions and corps, and on July 29th the 5th Division left the Second Army and was moved by train to join the Third Army. On August 2nd the 1st Battalion relieved the 410th French Regiment near Fricourt, east of Albert. The Somme area was a pleasant change from Flanders ; at this period of the war it was a quiet front, and as compared with Hill 60, there was little shelling. The Battalion remained on this part of the front until the end of the year, occupying trenches in the Maricourt section, and usually going back for rest to Bray. On December 3rd, Lieut.-Colonel C. R. J. Griffith, D.S.O., left the Battalion on promotion to the command of the 108th Brigade, and was succeeded by Lieut.-Colonel B. R. Roche until January 3rd, 1915, when Lieut.-Colonel C. C. Onslow took command.

During the summer of 1915, the 6th, 7th and 8th Service Battalions of the Regiment all arrived in France. The 6th (Service) Battalion, raised and trained at Aldershot by Lieut.-Colonel H. F. Barclay, was allotted to the 112th Brigade of the 37th Division, commanded by Major-General Count Gleichen, and embarked for France

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at the end of July. Soon after the Battalion reached France, Lieut.-Colonel H. F. Barclay was ordered to Armentières, and Lieut.-Colonel R. T. Toke (Welsh Regiment) took command. After a short stay in the Second Army area, the 37th Division was moved down to the Third Army area, and at the end of the year was alternately in the line near Hannescamps and in support at Bienvillers.

The 7th (Service) Battalion went out almost at the same time as the 6th, crossing the Channel on the night of the 25th–26th July with the 54th Brigade of the 18th Division, which was commanded by Major-General Ivor Maxse.\* It too went to the Third Army, and in September the Battalion had its first experience of the line in the Fricourt sector, in which it remained until the end of the year.

The 8th (Service) Battalion was raised and trained at Shoreham under Colonel E. S. Kennedy, and arrived in France on August 31st, in the 71st Brigade of the 24th Division. Though it was the last of the service battalions to reach France, the fortune of war brought it first of the three into battle. Joffre had planned a great autumn campaign for 1915 which he believed would result in breaking the German front. His main effort was in Champagne, and thither the French troops relieved by our Third Army had gone. Simultaneously with the Champagne attack, Foch with the Tenth French Army was to carry the Vimy Ridge, which he had failed to secure in the spring, and advance from the Arras-Lens front over the ridge to Douai. Joffre pressed us strongly to co-operate with Foch's attack on the Vimy Ridge by attacking north of Lens across the plain of Loos ; the hope being that those two attacks would pinch out the intricate mining area of Lens. So during the summer our First Army extended its right and relieved the French in the trenches opposite Loos. When they came to

\* Now General Sir Ivor Maxse, K.C.B., C.V.O., D.S.O.

examine the ground, neither Sir John French nor Sir Douglas Haig considered the Loos front suitable for attack, but Joffre was insistent, and the British Government directed our Commander-in-Chief to co-operate with him. So the preparations for the battle of Loos went forward. As we were still without sufficient guns and shell to prepare for an infantry assault effectively, it was decided to use gas discharged from cylinders. A number of experiments with gas had been made during the summer, and a sufficient supply was forthcoming.

We and the French were both to attack on September 25th. Our First Army was to attack with the 4th Corps composed of the 47th, 15th, 1st and 7th Divisions, in that order from right to left, and with the 1st Corps composed of the 9th and 2nd Divisions, while a new 11th Corps was in reserve. This 11th Corps was made up of the newly formed Guards Division commanded by General the Earl of Cavan, now Colonel of the Regiment, which had been brought together by relieving the Guards Battalions in other divisions, and the 21st and 24th Divisions, which had just landed in France. There was no time to give these two last divisions any of the preliminary training in the trenches, which was the usual experience of divisions when they first came out, but as it was intended that the corps should only be used after the 4th and 1st Corps had broken the German front, this was not held to be a disadvantage ; these two divisions therefore went into battle without previous experience of fire. The 11th Corps assembled near St. Omer, and on September 21st marched forward to the battlefield. So the eve of the battle found the 2nd Battalion with the 7th Division, once more under the command of Sir Thompson Capper, in assembly trenches at Noyelles, where was the 21st Brigade ; while dawn on the 25th found the 8th Battalion in Béthune, the 11th Corps being assembled between that town and Nœux-les-Mines.

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The use of gas depended upon there being a favourable westerly breeze, and elaborate preparations had been made to obtain an accurate weather forecast. Before dawn on the 25th there was hardly any breeze at all, but the experts predicted that there would be a light westerly breeze at dawn, and Sir Douglas Haig ordered the gas to be released. On the right of the 4th Corps the gas clouds rolled as intended over the German lines, and the 47th Division on the right successfully established a defensive flank towards Lens, while the 15th Division stormed through and beyond Loos. On the front of the 1st Division, which was on the right of the 7th Division, the gas hung about above our own lines and overcame many of our men, while the Germans were able to stick to the trenches, so here the attack was hung up. On the front of the 7th Division and on that of the 9th Division on its left, the gas was successfully released, and the leading brigades of both divisions stormed the first and second German lines, but the failure of the 1st Division exposed the right of the 7th Division, and about 11.30 a.m. the 21st Brigade, which had moved up to Chapelle Notre Dame de Consolation just behind our original front line, was sent forward along the line of the Hulluch Road to support the right of the division. After crossing the German front line, which had been carried by the 20th Brigade, the 2nd Battalion came under a heavy enfilade fire and suffered severely. It advanced by rushes to what was subsequently known as Gun trench, about 500 yards west of Hulluch, and thence two platoons advanced to Hulluch, which was found to be strongly held by the enemy in trenches protected by uncut wire, so the two platoons dribbled back to Gun trench, which the battalion proceeded to consolidate and hold. This advance on Hulluch was very costly ; Second Lieutenant C. A. Forward was killed, Captain J. W. Hutchinson died of wounds, Lieut.-Colonel C. C. Onslow, C.M.G., the com-

manding officer was wounded, and so were his adjutant, Captain J. W. Hurrell, and Captain J. Mc. M. Milling,\* Second Lieutenants H. E. Mudford, R. Hopkins and R. L. Shaw, while 300 of the rank and file fell in action. About midnight the Germans made a determined counter-attack from Hulluch, and pushed back some isolated parties of the Gordons, and produced considerable confusion in the dark amongst our troops, the units of which were much mixed up as the result of the battle of the 25th. B Company of the 2nd Battalion was driven back on its support trench, but D Company on its left stood fast, and this together with the gallant conduct of Lieut.-Colonel E. I. de S. Thorpe † of the Regiment, who was in command of a battalion of the Border Regiment, in rallying his men enabled a prompt counter-attack to be organised, which resulted in the recapture of the portion of Gun trench which the enemy had secured, almost all the Germans who had made the attack being either killed or taken prisoners. In this night attack, Second Lieutenants T. C. Pearson and K. L. Stephenson were killed, and Lieutenant F. Logan and Second Lieutenant Hunter were wounded. So that by dawn on the 26th the battalion, still holding Gun trench, had lost thirteen officers and rather more than 50 per cent. of the rank and file.

It is now time to turn to the 8th Battalion. The 71st Brigade to which it belonged marched from Béthune at 10 a.m. on the 25th, the men having just had the last meal they were to get until their part in the battle was over. The march from Béthune was by Sailly-la-Bourse and Vermelles, along roads congested with supply and ammunition lorries, wounded coming back and German prisoners, and was painfully slow and fatiguing. Vermelles, only some eight miles from Béthune, was not

\* Now Lieut.-Colonel J. Mc. M. Milling, M.C., commanding the 1st Battalion.

† Now Brigadier-General E. I. de S. Thorpe, C.M.G., D.S.O.

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reached until after dark, and the battalion passed the night in our old support line east of Vermelles. There it had its first casualty, the commanding officer, Colonel E. S. Kennedy, being gassed by the explosion near him of a German gas shell, and Major J. S. Liddell took command. Sir Douglas Haig had put in all his available troops in the first attack, believing that he would be at once supported by the 11th Corps if the German front line was broken. Sir John French, on the other hand, did not wish to release the 11th Corps until he saw how the battle was going, and he miscalculated the time it would take to get a large body of troops up through the back area of a battlefield. The result was that the two leading divisions of the 11th Corps were not ready to advance until dawn on the 26th. Had they been up by 11 a.m. on the 25th as Sir Douglas Haig wished, it is probable that we should have gained a considerable success, but as our attack was subsidiary to the French attack on the Vimy Ridge, which was on a much larger scale and failed completely, it is very improbable, even if the support of the 11th Corps had been timely, that we should have made a sufficient break in the German front to lead to any decisive result. As it was, the 21st and 24th Divisions were directed at dawn on the 26th to advance between the Vermelles-Hulluch Road and Loos, to fill the gap caused by the check to the 1st Division. Not long after the leading battalions of those divisions had reached the front, the Germans delivered a heavy flank attack on the 21st Division from Bois Hugo, just north of Hill 70, combined with a frontal attack from Hulluch. These attacks broke the 21st Division, and the 24th was involved with the failure of the 21st. Both divisions fell back in confusion. New troops, coming up without food after a long and tiring crawl along congested roads and over broken trenches, they never had a fair chance. They were the victims of misunderstandings in

high places. Fortunately for the 8th Battalion, the 71st Brigade was on the extreme left of the two divisions, and was thus the furthest from the scene of the disaster, while the battalion was in brigade reserve, and never came into action at all. Besides the commanding officer, Second Lieutenant A. G. Hedges and some half dozen rank and file were wounded, and these were its only casualties. The 24th Division was withdrawn on the 27th, and after a rest the 8th Battalion went up to the Ypres Salient, where it was attached first to the 8th and then to the 16th Brigade, and went into the line north-west of Wieltje, where from December 17th until after Christmas Day it had an unpleasant time from German shells and gas, losing Captain R. H. Gretton, Lieutenants C. J. Williams, C. S. Shippey and E. Mills, its total casualties in the tour amounting to 240.

We left the 2nd Battalion in Gun trench at dawn on September 26th. After enduring a long day's shelling, the battalion was relieved at 8 p.m. by the Scots Fusiliers, and went back to the old German front line in reserve to the brigade. On the night of the 29th-30th, it relieved a battalion of the Camerons in Stone Alley, the next trench to the north of Gun trench, which was still held by the Scots Fusiliers. This phase of the battle comprised a series of German counter-attacks, varied by local attacks made by us in order to adjust our new defensive line. During the night of the 30th-1st, the Germans made a determined counter-attack, mainly with bombers, on Gun trench and Stone Alley. At this time the German bombs were very superior to ours, and it was difficult to cope with this form of attack. The Germans forced their way into Gun trench and thus exposed the right of the Bedfords, who hung on successfully to Stone Alley. Two of the battalion's machine guns were in Gun trench so as to bring a cross fire to bear on the ground in front of Stone Alley, and these were gallantly and skilfully with-

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drawn to Stone Alley. Private W. Jackson received the D.C.M. and the French Croix de Guerre for his behaviour in this affair. The Bedfords then made an unsuccessful attempt to drive the Germans out of Gun trench with bombs ; in this attempt Major J. C. Monteith was killed. He had taken over the command when Lieut.-Colonel C. C. Onslow was wounded. Second Lieutenant E. F. S. Dyer was also wounded. The battalion then blocked the right of Stone Alley, and attempts to recover Gun trench were for the time abandoned. Major H. F. Bidder of the Royal Sussex Regiment, who was brigade machine gun officer, then took temporary command of the battalion, which was relieved on the battlefield, and went north to go into the line first in the Cuinchy and after in the Givenchy sector.

Early in the battle of Loos the 7th Division lost its leader, Sir Thompson Capper. He had chosen a very forward position for his battle headquarters, the better to control the division, and when it was suggested to him that he should cover up the red band on his cap, he answered characteristically, "No. I intend to wear my best cap with its gold lace and red band. The object of general officers wearing gorgeous apparel is that they may be easily distinguished. It is all the more important that in battle they and staff officers should be quickly and easily found." He was spotted by a German sniper and killed. So died, mourned by his whole division, a fine leader and a very gallant gentleman. Brig.-General H. Watts, who was as much loved and respected by the 21st Brigade as Capper was by the division, was promoted to the command of the division in his stead.

At the beginning of December the battalion left the line and marched to Lillers to entrain for the south. In the reorganisation of the divisions, which has already been mentioned, the 2nd Battalion was allotted to the 89th Brigade of the 30th Division. This division was raised by

Lord Derby, and was known as the Liverpool Pals, and in view of the Regiment's close connection with an earlier Earl of Derby, it was an interesting chance which brought it to this particular division. Its association with "the immortal 7th Division" was thus severed. In that division it had fought at Ypres, Neuve Chapelle, Festubert, Givenchy and Loos, and between October 1914 and November 1915 it had lost in killed and wounded 64 officers and 1,687 other ranks.

On arrival in the Somme area, the battalion, then under Major H. S. Poyntz,\* went to Ribeaucourt for training with its new division, and there it passed the second Christmas of the war. The end of 1915 then found the 1st, 2nd, 6th and 7th Battalions respectively in the 5th, 30th, 37th and 18th Divisions, all in the Third Army. The 8th Battalion was in the 6th Division up at Ypres. The 3rd and 4th Battalions were at home in the Harwich defences. The 9th Battalion, which had been formed from the 3rd by Colonel T. Hammond, was at Colchester under Lieut.-Colonel H. T. Godden, D.S.O., as was the 10th Battalion under Lieut.-Colonel W. B. Piers (late Indian Army).

Owing to the heavy losses of the battalions in France, both the 9th and 10th Battalions were turned into reserve or draft-finding battalions. It was significant of the strain on the voluntary system at the end of 1915, of the heavy casualties in officers and of the comparative readiness with which men came forward to take commissions, that at this time the 10th Battalion once went on church parade at Colchester with 100 officers and ten men.

There remains one other battalion of the Regiment to be accounted for, the 5th, which was the first of the Regiment to see service during the Great War, elsewhere than on the Western Front.

\* Now Lieut.-Colonel H. S. Poyntz, D.S.O., Commandant, Duke of York's Royal Military School, Dover.

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At the end of July 1914, the 5th Battalion, like most other battalions of the Territorial Army, was in its annual camp, which happened to be in Ashridge Park. There on August 2nd, when the Government proclaimed the precautionary period of mobilisation, it was ordered to return to Bedford, where on August 4th it received its orders to mobilise. Thence its first move was to Romford, where it formed part of the 162nd Brigade of the 54th Division. Kitchener's decision to form new armies instead of expanding the Territorial Army was naturally a disappointment to the members of that army. At Romford the greater part of the battalion had volunteered for foreign service, and rumours were rife that it was to go overseas. Instead it was sent to Bury St. Edmunds, where the 54th Division formed part of the Home Defence forces. In September 1914 it formed the nucleus of a new battalion, at first called the 5th Reserve Battalion, and during the summer of 1915, as the need for draft-finding units increased a third battalion was formed. The three battalions became, as the expansion of our army was systematised, the 1st/5th, 2nd/5th and 3rd/5th Battalions of The Bedfordshire Regiment. Meantime a few battalions of the 54th Division, including the 1st The Hertfordshire Regiment, had been selected for foreign service, and impatience in those left at home increased. At length in July 1915 orders came to embark for an unknown destination.

The naval attempts to force the Dardanelles, begun on February 19th, 1915, had definitely failed on March 18th. It was then at long last decided to attack the Gallipoli Peninsula in a combined naval and military operation, and a Dardanelles expeditionary force was created under the command of Sir Ian Hamilton, with French co-operation. The military landings were made on April 25th, but the Turks had been alarmed and were prepared, and despite the desperate gallantry of our men, all that

had been achieved by the beginning of May was that we had secured a position across the southern end of the Peninsula, and about midway up its western coast had established ourselves in the fringe of the high ground above Anzac Cove. On both these fronts there was a deadlock of trench warfare as complete as on the Western Front.

In these circumstances Sir Ian Hamilton wired home on May 10th for reinforcements to enable him to extend his operations. Unfortunately just at this time there was a change of Government. Mr. Asquith's administration had fallen and been replaced by a Coalition ministry. There was consequently a long delay in coming to a decision, and it was not until June 8th that Sir Ian learned that he was to be sent a 9th Army Corps composed of the 10th, 11th and 13th New Army Divisions, and later he heard that these were to be followed by the infantry of the 53rd and 54th Divisions. With these troops Sir Ian proposed to make a fresh landing in the Peninsula. For this a moon was necessary, but owing to the delay we missed the July moon, and before the August moon arrived the Turks had been reinforced.

The new landing was made by the 9th Corps on August 6th, while an attack was made from Anzac on the Sari Bair ridge. The landing was successful and surprised the Turks, but partly owing to the inexperience of these troops and to the difficulty of providing them with water, but still more owing to lack of initiative and enterprise in some of the commanders, it failed to gain a footing on the high ground to the east of Suvla Bay, and all that was achieved was that we were able to link up with the Suvla Bay and Anzac fronts, and extend considerably our position at the latter.

The 1st/5th Battalion embarked on July 26th and arrived at Mudros on August 10th, too late for the landing, but even if it had been in time it is doubtful

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whether there would have been either room or water for more troops on August 6th. The 54th Division landed at Suvla Bay on August 11th and went into reserve, but by that time all the sting had gone out of the new enterprise, and there was much confusion and despondency. The 54th Division first came into action on August 12th, when the 163rd Brigade were ordered to drive back Turkish snipers about the centre of the Suvla Bay front near Anafarta Ova. In this attack the 1st/5th Norfolks, gallantly led by their Colonel, Sir Horace G. Proctor-Beauchamp, Bart., C.B., not only drove back the snipers but pressed on with the bayonet after the flying Turks up the wooded slopes, and almost the whole of the Sandringham company formed from the King's estate disappeared, hardly a man coming back. A little more of such dash on August 7th when the Turks were fewer and unprepared would almost certainly have brought victory, but on the 12th when the enemy was numerous and ready it was of no avail. The incident showed that there was no lack of enterprise and valour in the East Anglian Division, and three days later the 1st/5th Bedfordshires gave further proof of that. Along the coast on the left of the Suvla Bay front ran a long ridge called the Kiretch Tepe Sirt, and on the western portion of this the 10th Irish Division had obtained a footing. Two brigades of the 10th Division were ordered to attack on the 15th to extend our hold on the ridge, and Brigadier de Winton's 162nd Brigade, the 1st/5th Battalion under Lieut.-Colonel E. W. Brighten \* leading, was ordered to support the right of this attack. The battalion, advancing with a dash equal to but more fortunate than that of the Norfolks, quickly carried its first objective. Then, undaunted by its losses, it again led the attack under a hellish fire on the second objective known as Kidney Hill. Though the final objective was

\* Now Lieut.-Colonel E. W. Brighten, C.M.G., D.S.O., T.D., commanding the 2nd Battalion.

not reached, the battalion established itself on an under feature of Kidney Hill, but with the loss of fourteen officers and 267 other ranks. Captain Brian C. Cumberland fell at the head of his company, Captain W. K. Meakin was killed and Captain C. T. Baker mortally wounded. Lieutenant R. D. J. Brighten, the colonel's brother, was killed, so were Lieutenants F. Rising and C. R. Lydekker. Lieutenants F. W. Ballance, L. J. Hunter, C. R. James, G. R. Day, W. S. Chirnside, E. L. Rawlins and J. T. Yarde were wounded. One company ended the day in command of Private H. Bryant, who was awarded the D.C.M., while Lieutenant W. S. Chirnside, destined later to command the 1st Battalion, won the Military Cross. It was in this action that the battalion gained its nickname of "The Yellow Devils." The men wore as a distinguishing badge an amber triangle on their sleeves and on the back of their helmets, and it is said that a staff officer, watching the attack through glasses, was moved to exclaim, "By Jove! If we had only one or two more battalions of those yellow devils we should be across the Peninsula to-morrow!" The name so earned has remained, and deserves to be preserved. It is not difficult to be gallant when tails are up and things are going well, but gallantry and dash amidst such general depression as prevailed on Suvla Bay when the 54th Division landed are rare qualities, and the record of August 15th, 1915, should, and doubtless will, be cherished in the battalion.

With the failure of the Suvla Bay landing, hopes of forcing our way across the Peninsula began to dwindle, and they vanished when early in October Bulgaria declared war, the Serbian Army was driven back, and direct communication with Germany and Turkey was opened. From the middle of August until the end of November, when the battalion was moved to Mudros, it was engaged in the dull and trying routine of trench

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warfare. Then the climate became the chief enemy. There were none of the comforts which made trench warfare on the Western Front endurable, heat, sand, flies and bad water produced dysentery which, despite the arrival of drafts, reduced the battalion's strength to 8 officers and 170 other ranks, when it left Anzac for Mudras. The stolid endurance of those miserable months may well be placed beside the gallantry of August 15th. On December 14th when the general evacuation was in progress, the battalion embarked at Mudros for Egypt, where the Dardanelles Army was sent to recover and prepare for fresh efforts. For their conduct in Gallipoli, Lieut.-Colonel E. W. Brighten and Major H. Younghusband were mentioned in despatches, Lieut.-Colonel E. W. Brighten being awarded the C.M.G., and Major H. Younghusband, who was wounded in Gallipoli and later killed in command of the 7th Battalion Gloucester Regiment in Mesopotamia, the D.S.O.

CHAPTER IX  
THE GREAT WAR, 1916  
THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

ON February 21st, 1916, the Germans began the battle of Verdun, and the situation there quickly became critical. Joffre at once appealed to Haig to relieve all French troops between the Somme and the Belgian right north of Ypres, and Haig immediately set about this business. The arrival of further divisions from home and of a steady stream of divisions which had fought in the Gallipoli campaign and after the evacuation had been rested and made up to strength in Egypt, enabled us to create the Fourth Army. This army, under Sir Henry Rawlinson, took over the British right from Maricourt, about 3,000 yards north of the Somme, to the Ancre Valley, the Third Army sideslipped northwards, while the First Army extended its right southwards, and these together relieved the French Tenth Army on the Arras-Vimy Ridge front. Our line thus became continuous from Maricourt to Boesinghe, where we joined the Belgians. When the strain on the French at Verdun became more severe, Joffre asked Haig to prepare a counter-offensive on the Somme, promising to support it to the utmost of his power. Haig thus during the summer gradually increased the strength of the Fourth Army to seventeen divisions, fifteen of which were in the front line, with 1,500 guns, and arranged for the Third Army on its left to co-operate in the attack with two more divisions. But the danger to Verdun used up more and more French troops, and the

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French share, which was at first intended to be forty divisions, shrank to sixteen, with five only in the front line. So for the first time we were preparing for a great battle in which the French part was to be subsidiary to our own. The vast preparations on the Fourth Army front took a long time and involved much hard work. They made surprise impossible, the more so as on the whole front the German positions dominated ours. It was therefore decided to precede the infantry assault with a prolonged bombardment to last an entire week, and it was hoped to overwhelm the enemy by weight of metal and of numbers.

During the first seven months of 1916 the British Army was then mainly occupied in relieving French troops, and in preparing for the battle of the Somme, and we may now turn to the doings of the battalions during that period.

The 2nd Battalion, still in the 30th Division, early in 1916 took over the right of the British line at Maricourt. The French left was at Frise on the Somme, the intervening valley which in winter is marshy being watched by posts only. At the end of January and the beginning of February, the Germans in order to distract attention from Verdun, began a series of bombardments followed by local attacks on various parts of the front. The scene of one of these enterprises was the Somme Valley between Frise and Maricourt, and on January 28th the 2nd Battalion was heavily bombarded in its rest billets in Suzanne, and the Germans attacking, drove the French out of Frise. The French in a counter-attack re-established a line short of the village, which they failed to recapture. At the end of March the battalion went out of the line and moved down to Bray to take part in the preparation for the Somme battle. There it met the 7th Battalion, which was in the neighbouring division, the 18th, the 18th and 30th Divisions forming the 13th Corps under General Congreve, V.C. in the Fourth Army ;

about this time the command of the 30th Division devolved on General Shea. On June 16th the battalion returned to the line, and eight days later the bombardment preliminary to the Somme battle began. While it was in progress the battalion carried out on the night of June 25th-26th a successful raid against the 62nd German Regiment, and on the night of the 28th-29th, two patrols under Second Lieutenants L. K. Waler and L. A. L. Fink penetrated the enemy's lines and brought back very useful information.

The 18th Division was, like the 30th on its right, mainly occupied during the first half of 1916 in preparations for the battle of the Somme. Early in the year, Sergeant Twiggs, the bombing sergeant of the 7th Battalion, won its first D.C.M. for gallantry in picking up a bomb which was about to explode and throwing it over the parapet. On April 27th the battalion carried out a raid into the German lines which was specially commended by the Commander-in-Chief. The party was led by Second Lieutenant H. Driver,\* who won the D.S.O. for his part in the affair, Sergeant Mills got the D.C.M., and Corporals Lancaster and Tozer, Military Medals, while the thirty-one privates who took part were given certificates of gallantry by the divisional commander, General Maxse. Then followed much hard work in preparation for the attack. On the eve of the battle, the 54th Brigade was disposed on the left of the 18th Division with the 7th Bedfords and 11th Royal Fusiliers in the front line, their objective being the Pommern Redoubt. Just as the final preparations were being made on June 26th, a shell burst in the officers' mess of C Company while the officers were at supper. Captains Clegg and Doake were wounded, and Lieutenants R. Baden, G. B. Hasler and E. W. J. Johnson killed. Private Fish at once set about digging out the buried officers though the air was thick with gas,

\* Captain Harry Driver, D.S.O., M.C., was killed in Russia in 1919.

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and for this and for gallant conduct on July 1st at the Pommern Redoubt, he was awarded the D.C.M.

Further north the 37th Division was not affected by the changes caused by the extension of our front, and it remained in the Third Army. The 6th Battalion in the 112th Brigade had a comparatively quiet time on its old front, going into the trenches on the Hannescamp and Bienvillers sectors, and when out of the line doing training and finding working parties at Humbercamp. On the night of May 3rd-4th, immediately following the arrival of Major F. H. Edwards \* to take command, the battalion, while holding the Bienvillers sector, was heavily bombarded by the enemy, and a German raiding party got into the trenches for a short time. This cost the battalion seventy-four casualties. From the beginning of June onwards, as the time for the battle of the Somme approached, the 37th Division began to be active. As part of the general plan the Third Army was to attack with two divisions the Gommecourt Salient on the right of the 37th Division, which was employed in distracting the enemy's attention from the point of attack. The *rôle* of the division in the battle was to have been to form a defensive flank if the 46th Division on its right was successful.

Early in 1916 the 1st Battalion began a slow progress northwards as the relief of the French Tenth Army proceeded. On March 9th it took over a section of the line just north of the River Scarpe, and on the 15th it moved up to Arras, and on the 17th it was in the line at Roclincourt ; there it remained with alternative periods of rest in Arras until the middle of July, when it was called south to take part in the battle of the Somme. On May 16th, Lieut.-Colonel C. C. Onslow left the battalion on promotion to command the 57th Infantry Brigade,

\* Later Lieut.-Colonel F. H. Edwards, D.S.O., M.C., The Leicestershire Regiment.

and Lieut.-Colonel W. Allason, recovered from his wound, arrived to take command just in time to lead the battalion to the Somme battlefields.

While the preparations for the battle of the Somme were going on further south the 8th Battalion was kept at work in the never healthy Ypres Salient. On January 14th, 1916, Major H. C. Jackson, D.S.O., came from the staff of the 6th Corps to take command in place of Lieut.-Colonel J. S. Liddell, whose health had broken down. The battalion continued to take its turn in the line north-west of Wielte. On February 13th, during a German attack on the 14th Division on its left, it had nineteen casualties and on the 15th two of its officers, Captain E. E. Simeons and Lieutenant E. N. Mitchell, were killed when on patrol. The next turn in the trenches took the battalion to Railway Wood on the right of the Menin Road, and while in this sector on March 11th, Lieutenant S. N. S. Kennedy was wounded, twelve other ranks were killed and thirty-three wounded during a bombardment of Sanctuary Wood. On March 16th the 6th Division went back for rest, and the battalion had a pleasant ten days at Calais. On April 15th it returned to the line in the Mortalje Salient. On the previous night it suffered a heavy loss, Lieut.-Colonel H. C. Jackson being wounded while reconnoitring the line. Four days later on April 19th, the enemy started a heavy bombardment which practically obliterated the battalion's trenches. All the officers of B and D Companies in the front line were killed or wounded, and in an attack the Germans got into B Company's trench. Company Sergeant-Major Rickard took command of D Company and led a party of twenty-seven men in a counter-attack which reached the enemy, but none of the party came back, and later counter-attacks were no more successful. The battalion's losses in this affair were Captain R. M. Quilter, and Second Lieutenants C. Cartwright, D. W.

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MacMichael, S. J. Vipond and H. A. Squier and ninety-nine other ranks killed, Second Lieutenants H. Player and W. E. Charles and ninety-eight other ranks wounded and thirty missing. On April 21st, Lieut.-Colonel W. R. H. Dann \* arrived to take command, but in less than a month he was hit on the Pilkem road, and on June 1st Lord Henry Scott became commanding officer. After another two months of routine in the trenches, the 6th Division was relieved on July 30th by the 29th Division, and then went south for the battle of the Somme.

It is now time to come to that great struggle in which every battalion of the Regiment on the Western Front took part sooner or later.

The battle of the Somme, which lasted from the beginning of July until the third week in November, was fought in three stages. Of these the first comprised the preliminary bombardment begun on June 24th, the first assault on July 1st, the operations from July 2nd to the 13th designed to clear the way for attack on the second German defensive system, and the attack on that system begun on July 14th. The second comprised the introduction of a new army under General Gough, which operated astride the Ancre, while our Fourth Army and the French on its right fought their way up the slope to the crest of the Somme uplands. The third stage consisted in attempts to work down the northern slope and to complete the battle by breaking through the enemy's defences into the open.

Early on the morning of July 1st the prolonged preliminary bombardment culminated in an hour of intense fire, and at 7.30 a.m. the infantry went over the top. South of the Somme the attack of the five French divisions which the Germans had not expected was completely successful. So were the attacks of the three

\* Now Colonel W. R. H. Dann, D.S.O., In Charge, Record and Pay Office, Shrewsbury.

divisions on our right, the 30th, 18th and 7th, but from Fricourt northwards we failed with very heavy loss. The strength of the German trenches and their deep dug-outs in the chalk were too much for our artillery, and the Germans were able to bring out their machine guns in time to mow down our infantry. The Regiment was fortunate in this opening phase of the battle, as the 2nd and 7th Battalions were in successful divisions, and the 6th Battalion was not brought into action, as owing to the repulse of the 46th Division in the attack on the Gommecourt Salient, the 37th Division was not required to establish a defensive flank. In this first attack the 30th Division swept forward, breaking through the whole of the German first system of defence, and captured Montauban, the 2nd Battalion under Lieut.-Colonel H. S. Poyntz moving in support of the extreme right of the British Army, its chief function being to "mop up" the trenches over which the leading battalion had passed. In this task it captured 300 prisoners and four machine guns, and ended the day some 600 yards south of Montauban, opposite the Briqueterie. Here it dug in, wired and held Bedford trench until it was relieved on the night of July 4th-5th. Its losses were Second Lieutenants W. E. Boulton and L. Dolman wounded, eight other ranks killed, one missing and seventy-one wounded.

The 7th Battalion under Lieut.-Colonel G. D. Price, with the 11th Royal Fusiliers on its right, led the left of the attack of the 18th Division. Going over the top at 7.30 a.m., within ten minutes the two leading companies had captured the first German trenches, but all the officers of the two companies had fallen. Led by the N.C.O.'s the men pressed on, well supported by the other two companies. By 9.30 a.m. the 7th Battalion and the Royal Fusiliers had gained their objective, Pommern trench and redoubt, and still continuing the advance, gained White trench, 2,200 yards from their starting point. For gallant

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conduct on this day, Second Lieutenants J. W. Colley, Captain A. E. Percival and Captain J. W. Turner, the medical officer of the battalion, were awarded the M.C., and Sergeant Impey, who led his company when all the officers had fallen, the M.M. After this fine feat the battalion was withdrawn to Carnoy for a short rest.

Sir Douglas Haig decided not to renew the frontal attacks on the strong German positions opposite his centre and left, but as Verdun was not yet out of danger, to exploit with the Fourth Army the success on his right in conjunction with the French, who were astride the Somme. In order that Sir Henry Rawlinson might give his whole mind to this task, Sir Douglas Haig formed from his left corps what was at first called the Reserve Army and afterwards the Fifth Army under General Gough. The duty of this army was to keep the enemy occupied on the Ancre front and act as a pivot for the advance of the Fourth Army. As part of the plan, the 112th Brigade was detached from the 37th Division and was moved down towards Albert to support the left of Gough's Army, and on July 8th the 6th Battalion was again in the line, forming a defensive flank during the attack on Ovillers and Contalmaison. On the 8th, 9th and 10th, the battalion was very heavily shelled, and lost 24 killed, 5 officers and 144 other ranks wounded, and 5 missing. On the 14th, the 112th Brigade took part in the attack on Pozières ; the attack failed, being held up by heavy machine gun fire, but the 6th Battalion was one of the few to gain and hold some ground. It lost 3 officers and 32 other ranks killed, 25 other ranks missing, and 9 officers and 174 other ranks wounded. It was then relieved, and went back to Albert.

To return to the Fourth Army, before another general attack could be made and an assault delivered on the second German system of defence, it was necessary to secure Trones Wood to cover our right flank and to

establish connection with the French. This last was allotted to the 30th Division, and the 2nd Battalion went up again to the front near the Briqueterie, which had meanwhile been captured on the night of July 10th-11th. The attack of the 2nd Battalion was made on July 11th, the South Africans being on its left in Bernafray Wood, and the 17th Liverpools on its right. A and B Companies got into the wood without much difficulty, but then the trouble began. The undergrowth was very dense, and it was very difficult to keep direction and control. D Company moving round by the left, established itself in the apex of the wood but was driven back, and after a long day's fighting the battalion could only make good a footing in the southern end of the wood, where it maintained itself throughout the 12th, being relieved early on the 13th. In this attack the battalion lost Lieutenant R. B. Gibson, killed, Captain C. G. Tyler, wounded and missing, Second Lieutenant L. H. Fox, captured while trying to locate an enemy sniper, Second Lieutenants F. E. Plummer and H. J. Brickell wounded, and 239 other ranks killed and wounded. After a further unsuccessful attempt on July 13th by the 18th Division, that division captured Trones Wood on July 14th, the 7th Battalion being in support. That night an attack by the 9th, 3rd, 7th and 21st Divisions broke through the German second system on a front of 6,000 yards, drove the enemy from Longueval and Delville Wood, and gave us a footing in High Wood. This brought the first phase of the battle to a close.

On July 18th the Germans counter-attacked in strength and drove us out of High and Delville Woods, and of the greater part of Longueval. Before further attacks on a large scale could be made by us, it was necessary that Longueval and Delville Woods should be secured, and also that we should take Maltzhorn Farm, Falfemont Farm and Guillemont on our right, in order to link up

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with the French, who by this time were established on our right astride the Somme. These operations brought the 5th and 6th Divisions into the battle for the first time, and the 30th Division back to the front again on our right flank. The 1st Battalion arrived at Ville-sur-Corbie on July 17th with the 5th Division, and there met some of the 2nd Battalion which was at rest. On July 20th it moved up to Pommern Redoubt, which the 7th Battalion had captured on July 1st, thence it went into the line just east of High Wood. On the 26th it was relieved in the trenches and moved down to take part in an attack on Longueval and Delville Woods. The attack was made at 2 a.m. on the 29th. The first objective, the cross-roads in Longueval, was captured by the 1st Norfolks, the 1st Battalion then leap-frogged through the Norfolks and took the second and third objectives, clearing the whole village and gaining touch with the 2nd Division on its right in Delville Wood. A number of prisoners was taken, including the regimental commander of the Brandenburgers, but the casualties were heavy. Captain H. P. C. Burton and Lieutenants A. C. Hayhoe, N. D. Weymss and A. C. Holland were killed ; Lieutenants E. A. Rex, M. Milton, F. D. R. Illingworth and C. J. Hunter were wounded ; 170 rank and file were killed or wounded. During the next two days the battalion had to endure very heavy shelling, and it beat off a number of German local counter-attacks. It held its ground though with heavy losses. Lieutenants A. N. Marshall and D. N. Gaussem were killed, Captain W. R. Nottidge, Lieutenants T. R. J. Mulligan, K. C. Johnston-Jones, R. J. Haye, C. P. Mattey and O. D. Roeber were wounded, and the casualties in other ranks amounted to 185. So the capture of Longueval cost the battalion sixteen officers and 355 other ranks. It was then relieved and went back to Longpré to rest, arriving there on August 4th.

Meanwhile the 30th Division had gone back to the front

on July 29th, the 89th Brigade, finding itself on its old ground near the Briqueterie. Thence at 4.45 a.m. on July 30th it advanced to attack Maltzhorn Farm in touch with the French on its right. The 2nd Battalion was in brigade reserve, and came in for very heavy shelling. The morning was very foggy, and the leading battalion of the brigade lost direction and got mixed up and suffered very heavily, but thanks to the prompt initiative of Lieut.-Colonel H. S. Poyntz, the battalion secured and consolidated a position on either side of Maltzhorn Farm, and on the ridge south of it in touch with the French. In this action, Lieutenants H. A. Chamen and R. F. C. Ballard were killed, Lieutenants J. T. Coe,\* H. C. Lovely, F. A. Sloan† and A. L. Gordon were wounded, and the casualties in other ranks were 186. General Shea, the divisional commander, especially complimented Colonel H. S. Poyntz and the battalion on the capture of Maltzhorn Farm, which was the more noteworthy as the Germans had just brought up eleven fresh battalions of the 12th Bavarian Reserve Division on the front of the 30th Division. After this action the 30th Division was relieved and went north to the First Army area. The 2nd Battalion after a short spell in the trenches at Givenchy, went back to Doullens, where the division was in G.H.Q. Reserve. It remained in reserve until the second week of October, when it went back once more to the Somme battle.

Meanwhile the Fifth Army had been engaged in keeping the enemy's attention on the Ancre front occupied and was making slow progress from Contalmaison and Ovillers towards Pozières Ridge, and on August 3rd, the 112th Brigade was back on the battlefield to the south of Mametz Wood to support the attack of the 23rd Division. Here the 6th Battalion was engaged from August 5th to

\* Now Major J. T. Coe.

† Now Captain F. A. Sloan, M.C.

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14th in a series of local attacks, which made very little progress, losing twelve killed and 101 wounded and twenty-five missing. On the night of 14th-15th the brigade was relieved, and went north to rejoin the 37th Division. During September and October the 6th Battalion was taking its turn in the Loos salient, and early in November was back training to take part in the battle of the Ancre.

By August 23rd the 1st Battalion was again on the move, for the 5th Division had been ordered back to the line. The Falfemont Farm Ridge had not yet been taken ; for nearly three weeks the Germans had repulsed every attack upon it, and its capture was necessary to secure our right flank before the next general attack could be made. The first attack on the Falfemont position by the 15th Brigade on September 3rd failed, though some ground was gained. The brigade was then ordered to make a second attack on the afternoon of the fourth, and this was delivered with the 1st Bedfords on the left centre of the brigade front, the battalion's line of advance taking it just north of Falfemont Farm towards Leuze Wood, with the Cheshire on its right and the Gloucesters on its left. The fight which followed was one of the fiercest local actions during the battle of the Somme. After prolonged hand to hand fighting the German resistance suddenly collapsed and the battalion took three officers and 128 men of the 164th German Regiment, and established itself on the ridge immediately north of Falfemont Farm, but of the twenty officers and 610 other ranks who had gone over the top only three officers, of whom one continued at duty though wounded, and 289 N.C.O.'s and men remained. Major N. W. Lawder, the second in command was killed, as were Lieuts. A. J. Howard, C. Blake, J. H. Banyard, V. S. Sanders and D. A. Lardner. Lieut.-Colonel W. Allason, Captains W. H. L. Barnett and West, and Lieuts. H. C. Covell,\* E. A. Hague, H. F.

\* Now Captain H. C. Covell, Royal Artillery (T.A.).

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Graves, Smith, Williams, W. Rankin, Gibbons, A. Topley and D. F. Howard were wounded. On the 5th the battalion endured some heavy shelling in the position it had captured, and that night it was relieved and went back for a short rest.

The 6th Division when it left the Ypres Salient joined the Fifth Army, and during the greater part of August held the front opposite Beaumont Hamel, the 8th Battalion taking its turn in the line on that sector. At the end of August the division was relieved, and after a short spell in G.H.Q. reserve was sent to the Fourth Army to join the 14th Corps under Lord Cavan. The task of the 6th Division was to take a strong German work, called the Quadrilateral, which lay between Leuze Wood and Ginchy, preparatory to a general attack to be made on September 15th. An attempt on the Quadrilateral made by the 71st Brigade on September 13th, in which the 8th Battalion co-operated, failed, though the battalion did what was asked of it in bombing the enemy out of a trench on the left of our attack. It was then decided to include the Quadrilateral in the general attack on the 15th.

This attack was made by ten divisions from Combles to Martinpuich, and was distinguished by the first appearance in battle of tanks. The attack resulted in the capture of Flers, High Wood, Martinpuich, and Courcellette, and brought our front well down the northern slope of the Somme Ridge towards the valley of the Upper Ancre. Again the 71st Brigade attacked the Quadrilateral and again the 8th Battalion supported the left of the attack, but again it failed. The tanks allotted to the attack did not arrive and our barrage was short. It was not until the 18th that this strong work, which had for weeks held out against every attack, was captured. In the assaults on the Quadrilateral the 8th Battalion suffered over 400 casualties, considerably more than half

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its strength. Lieuts. C. M. Leys, H. L. M. Thomas, E. R. W. Draisey, A. G. Hodges, C. J. Buch, and J. V. Vaulkhard were killed, Captains R. B. L. Hatch \* and P. Steyn and Lieuts. W. Heath, J. A. England, J. Lodge, A. W. Smith and W. E. Charles were wounded.

The Quadrilateral captured, the division pushed its front forward to within 800 yards of Morval and Les Boeufs. This prepared the way for another general attack on September 25th and 26th on the front from Morval to Thiepval. For this attack the 5th Division came back into the line, the 5th and 6th Divisions forming our right, while the 18th Division also returned to the Somme battlefield and attacked Thiepval on our extreme left. Thus the 1st, 8th and 7th Battalions were engaged in this battle, which resulted in the capture of Combles, Morval, Les Boeufs and Thiepval, and was the last considerable success gained during the battle of the Somme, for already the weather had broken and mud was becoming an invaluable ally to the hard-pressed enemy.

Fortunately the weather cleared in time for the attack of September 25th, which was everywhere successful. On the right the 15th Brigade made a leap-frogging attack on Morval, the objective of the 5th Division. The Norfolks led the attack, then the 1st Battalion passed through the Norfolks to take the sunken road just in front of Morval, the Cheshires and Warwicks then went through the Bedfords and cleared the village. An unusually large number of prisoners was taken ; on the whole front of attack 9,700 Germans, 27 guns, and 200 machine guns were captured, and the casualties were for once comparatively light. In the 1st Battalion 2nd Lieut. D. B. Candy was killed and 2nd Lieut S. H. Draper was wounded ; the total casualties were 117. This was the last operation on the right flank in the battle of the Somme. The 5th Division continued to hold the ground

\* Now Major R. B. L. Hatch, M.C., commanding the Dépôt at Bedford.

captured until October 26th, when the 1st Battalion said good-bye to the battlefield.

The attack of the 6th Division on Les Boeufs was as successful as that of the 5th on Morval, and the 8th Battalion being in reserve was not required in the front line, and got off with very few casualties. The 6th Division was relieved on September 30th, but was brought back on October 8th to take part in the attack on Le Transloy. This, much hampered by mud and bad weather, was only partially successful, and on October 20th the division was relieved and went off to join the First Army. During the Le Transloy operations the 8th Battalion lost Lieut. J. S. Gibson, 2nd Lieut. F. L. Sharpen and forty-six other ranks killed and sixty-five wounded.

The attack on Thiepval and the Thiepval Ridge by the Fifth Army followed immediately that of the Fourth Army on Morval and Les Boeufs, and was made by the 1st and 2nd Canadian Divisions, the 11th Division and the 18th Division on September 26th. The attack on the village was made by the 18th Division with the 11th Division on its right. The 18th Division advanced with the 53rd Brigade on the right, the 54th on the left and the 7th Bedfords were in the reserve of the 54th Brigade. The three leading battalions of the brigade captured the greater part of the western half of the village, but suffered heavy losses and were completely exhausted in the process. Further advance by both the 54th and 53rd Brigades was held up by the Germans in that portion of the village remaining in their hands, and General Maxse decided to use the 7th Bedfords to complete the capture of Thiepval. For this it was necessary to relieve the 7th Battalion in Thiepval Wood and during the night get it into position for the attack before dawn. This night relief General Maxse afterwards described as "the finest example of efficiency and battle discipline which had been seen in the 18th Division during the course of the Somme and Ancre

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operations of the past five months." Its success was due to the admirable arrangements made by Lieut.-Colonel G. D. Price and his company commanders. The battalion was ready for the assault at 5.45 a.m. It was led by C and D Companies under Captain L. H. Keep. There was no chance of any help from the artillery, and from the very start the most determined resistance was encountered. The right of the right company was early held up by heavy rifle and machine gun fire from a number of strong points. By his dash and gallantry 2nd Lieut. T. E. Adlam \* cleared the right flank with his platoon, killing or capturing all the Germans opposed to him. He personally bombed the Germans out with their own bombs, and though wounded continued to lead his men until he was again wounded on the 28th. For this prompt and bold leadership, which made possible the success of the rest of the two companies, Adlam was awarded the V.C. By 11 a.m. on the 27th the last German had been driven from Thiepval or captured, the two companies taking seventy-six prisoners. The capture of Thiepval cost the battalion one officer and forty-three rank and file killed, four officers and fifty rank and file wounded.

The division went on to capture the Schwaben Redoubt on the 28th, the two fresh companies of the 7th Battalion leading the left of the attack with the two which had completed the capture of Thiepval in support. Speaking of the battalion's attack, the history of the 18th Division says : "The Bedfords had behaved magnificently and followed and fought close on the heels of the barrage from start to finish." Second Lieut. T. E. Adlam, though again wounded, led his men magnificently, again displaying great personal bravery. Private Goldhawk won the D.C.M. for rushing a German machine gun and putting the whole team out of action. Company Sergeant-

\* Afterwards Captain T. E. Adlam, V.C., Army Educational Corps.

Majors Hall and Brand also won the D.C.M. for gallant leading of their companies when all the officers had fallen, and a fourth D.C.M. was won by Lance-Corporal Harris for gallantry in beating off a German counter-attack with his Lewis gun, and a fifth by Sergeant Wyatt for leading a bombing attack in which thirty-four prisoners were taken. The losses of the battalion in the attack on the Schwaben Redoubt were four officers and fifteen other ranks killed, and six officers and ninety-seven other ranks wounded ; making the total casualties since dawn on the 27th fifteen officers and 205 other ranks. The 54th Brigade was then relieved and was out of the line for three weeks, to return on October 23rd, when it went into Regina trench about three miles north-west of Thiepval. Continuous rain and seas of mud prevented any attack, and such trenches as there were were constantly bombarded. During this period Corporals Mullen and Dean and Privates Thompson and Gough of the 7th Battalion were awarded the M.M. for gallantry and devotion to duty. The 18th Division was finally relieved on the Somme battlefield on November 17th and went back to rest in the Abbeville district.

The last action in the battle of the Somme, in which a battalion of the Regiment was engaged, was a renewed attempt to take the Transloy Ridge and the Butte de Warlencourt. The advance of the Fourth Army had left the enemy in the Ancre valley in a very pronounced salient, and the object of the Transloy operation was to accentuate this salient still further in the hope that the enemy would be forced to abandon the Ancre valley. It was in fact too late in the season for such an attempt, which should never have been made, for bad weather was continuous. For the attack which was made on the night of October 11th-12th the 9th and 30th Divisions had been brought up to the front, the objective of the 9th Division being the Butte de Warlencourt and of the

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30th the Transloy Ridge. So the 2nd Battalion came back with the 30th Division for its fourth and last effort in the Somme battle. The battalion acquitted itself gallantly under miserable conditions of wet and mud, and was the only one on the whole front of the corps to win any ground. It secured some 200 yards of Bite trench and 70 yards of Grid trench, and in return for these insignificant gains it lost ten officers and 242 other ranks, while the losses in the battalions which had made no progress were even heavier. Lieut. W. White and 2nd Lieuts. H. G. Fyson, F. J. Chadwick, W. H. Bird, and L. H. Walker were killed, Lieut.-Colonel H. S. Poyntz, Lieut. R. Hopkins, 2nd Lieuts. J. P. Pitts and P. J. Reiss were wounded, and 2nd Lieut. T. J. G. Reynolds died of wounds. On October 14th the battalion was moved back into reserve, where it had fourteen further casualties, Lieut. Shaw being severely wounded. It left the Somme battlefield on October 26th. For their work on the Somme Lieut.-Colonel H. S. Poyntz, Captain R. O. Wynne, Lieut. J. W. Hurrell \* and 2nd Lieuts. G. A. Anstee and L. H. Walker, Company Q.M.S. Maidment and Lance-Sergeant Wilson were mentioned in dispatches, Lieut.-Colonel H. S. Poyntz and Captain R. O. Wynne were awarded the D.S.O. ; 2nd Lieut. G. A. Anstee † the M.C., and Captain and Quartermaster H. Cressingham received promotion to Major. Second Lieut. L. A. L. Fink won the M.C., Lance-Sergeant Selby the bar to the M.M. ; M.M.'s were gained by C.Q.M.S. Maidment, Sergeants Foster, Pepper, Wheeler, Grant, Laycock and Allen, Lance-Corporals Trowbridge, Eley, Pearce and Hayes, and Privates Excell, Godsall and Scrivener.

The five battalions of the Regiment which had taken part in the battle of the Somme between July 1st and October 31st, had suffered the loss of 124 officers and 2,892

\* Now Captain J. W. Hurrell, M.C.  
† Now Captain G. A. Anstee, M.C.

men.\* As compared with other regiments it had been fortunate as in nearly every case its attacks had been successful. It is easy to see now that it would have been better to have stopped the battle at the end of September, when bad weather began, and so to have avoided the heavy losses of October and November, when very little progress was made, but G.H.Q. believed the exhaustion of the Germans to warrant hopes of a break through. With this exception the gallantry and endurance of our infantry in the Somme battle, which has never been excelled in the long history of the British infantry, had its reward. Verdun was relieved, and before Christmas the French had won back all the ground on that front which the Germans had won at great cost in the first half of 1916 ; while as we now know the exhaustion of the Germans was far greater than that of our men, and we had the larger reserves. That exhaustion led to the dismissal of von Falkenhayn and the placing of the supreme command of the German armies in the hands of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, who organised the retreat of 1917 to escape the predicament on the Somme. That retreat, which was the direct result of the Somme, had momentous consequences, for if in March, 1918, the Germans had attacked from the positions they held in 1916 and made similar progress, they would have reached the neighbourhood of Abbeville and divided the French and British Armies. Unfortunately, neither the British nor the French Governments believed in the exhaustion of the Germans, while they were only too well aware of the long tale of our losses, so changes were made which gave the Germans time to recover, and lost us some of the advantages which we had won at great price. But before coming to those changes and their consequences we must

\* These losses are exclusive of those suffered by battalions of the Regiment when holding the line elsewhere than on the Somme battlefield. I deal for the sake of continuity with the battles of the Ancre separately.

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complete the story of the battle of the Somme by that of the battle of the Ancre, which emerged out of the greater struggle.

Until midsummer, 1916, the 4th Battalion had continued to form part of the Harwich Defence Force, but on July 10th it received orders to prepare for service overseas. The Royal Naval Division had, after its first unfortunate adventure at Antwerp, been sent out to the Dardanelles and had taken a strenuous part in the Gallipoli Campaign. On the evacuation of the Dardanelles it had remained in garrison on the islands of the Eastern Aegean, and was transferred to the Western Front in May. There it was reconstituted as the 63rd Division, and it required an additional brigade to complete its strength. To this brigade, the 190th, the 4th Battalion, under Lieut.-Colonel R. P. Croft, was sent. In September Lieut.-Colonel R. P. Croft left to take command of the 17th Infantry Brigade, and Major A. E. Greenwell took command. After the usual training in the line the 190th Brigade began to prepare for more serious work, and the end of October found the 4th Battalion in the line at Hamel, just north of the Ancre, the 63rd Division being then in the 5th Corps of General Gough's Army.

The advance of the Fourth Army and in particular the capture of Thiepval had left the Germans in the Ancre valley in a salient, and in order to accentuate that salient the Fifth Army was preparing to advance astride the Ancre, its main effort to be made north of the river with the Beaumont Hamel Ridge as its objective. This task was allotted to the 19th and 39th Divisions south of the river, and to the 63rd, 51st, 2nd, 3rd, and 31st Divisions, in that order from right to left north of the river. The attack was made on November 13th and that south of the river was completely successful, the 39th Division speedily capturing St. Pierre Divion with comparatively small loss ; but the task of the troops north of the river proved,

owing to the state of the ground and of the weather, to be more formidable, indeed, from this cause the 3rd and 31st Divisions on the left had at an early stage to abandon their efforts. Zero hour was 6 a.m., and the battle started in pitch darkness, accentuated by a thick fog. The enemy was surprised and took to his dugouts, but in the darkness many of these were missed, and the greater part of the 190th Brigade, including the 4th Battalion, was held up by rifle and machine gun fire from dugouts after capturing the first German trenches. Nevertheless the 190th Brigade held on grimly to what they had gained and from this worked their way forward into the second German system of defence. This greatly helped the operations of the troops on the left, and by nightfall on the 17th the 63rd Division had captured the greater part of Beaucourt, and the 51st Division Beaumont. Over 7,000 prisoners were captured. In this its first battle, the 4th Battalion lost 8 officers and 48 other ranks killed, 1 officer and 9 other ranks died of wounds, 4 officers and 108 other ranks wounded, and 16 missing. The officer casualties were : killed, Captain F. G. C. Ashmead-Bartlett, Lieuts. B. L. Frere, R. H. Boys, W. A. Turnbull, 2nd Lieuts. J. Brodie, H. B. Hudson, S. H. Agate, and T. H. Hill. Died of wounds : 2nd Lieuts. L. S. Wilkinson. Wounded : 2nd Lieuts. A. N. Fraser, L. Brooks, W. T. Bridges, R. J. Thomas, and Lieut. G. Arthur, R.A.M.C. attached.

During December and January the 4th Battalion continued to take its turn in the line in the Ancre valley, with brief periods of rest. The attack of November 13th had made the position of the Germans in that valley even more uncomfortable than it was before and, as soon as the weather began to improve in January, the Fifth Army began again to press them. In the first fortnight of January the 3rd, 7th and 11th Divisions on the left completed the capture of the Beaumont Hamel Ridge and by the end of the month there were signs that the Germans

were beginning to withdraw from the salient. On the night of February 3rd-4th the 63rd Division extended its hold in the valley, the 4th Battalion being in reserve on that occasion. A week later, on the night of February 10th-11th, further progress up the valley was made, the 4th Battalion suffering seventy casualties. On February 17th the 2nd, 18th and 63rd Divisions made another attack on both banks of the river, both the 4th Battalion in the 63rd Division and the 7th Battalion in the 18th Division being in reserve during the action. This attack proved conclusively that the Germans were withdrawing. The retreat to the Hindenburg line had begun, and the story of that event must be left to the next chapter.

To complete the account of the Regiment's work in 1916 we must go back to the 5th Battalion, which we had left in Egypt after the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula. Soon after its arrival in Egypt, the 54th Division was sent into camp at Mena, under the shadow of the pyramids, and there the 5th Battalion had two months of very valuable rest and training. Meanwhile a system of defence east of the Suez Canal had been organised, and early in April, 1916, the division went into No. 1 Sector of the defensive system, and the 5th Battalion found itself holding trenches in the desert east of the southern end of the Little Bitter Lake.

In January, 1916, General Sir Archibald Murray took over the command of the troops in Egypt and reorganised them as the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. He soon realised that a passive defence of the Canal would lock up a large number of troops, and proposed to economise in the defence of Egypt by pushing out into the Sinai Desert and occupying the oases along the coast route, the only one by which a large force of Turks could advance. In pursuance of this policy the first of three oases Romani was occupied, the construction of a broad gauge railway was begun, accompanied by a pipe line to bring water

from Egypt into the desert. Eventually, on December 21st, El Arish, the largest and most important of the oases, was seized and this brought us within reach of the southern frontier of Palestine. While these events were going on in the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula active patrolling into the desert was taking place from No. 1 sector in the south ; the most important of these was made by a column under Brigadier-General Mudge, of which the 5th Battalion formed part, into the hills at Bir El Tawal, thirty miles out into the desert, between September 14th and 17th. The Turks were surprised, and fled after a brief resistance, and the enemy's camp and stores were captured with small loss. By the end of the year the conquest of the Sinai Desert had been practically completed , and on January 30th, 1917, the 54th Division was moved up to Kantara and marched thence along the coast route to El Arish, which was reached by the 5th Battalion on February 23rd, and there it began to prepare for the invasion of Palestine.

## CHAPTER X

### THE GREAT WAR, 1917

THE retreat of the Germans to the Hindenburg line had begun early in February. It had been carefully prepared, but even so it might have been a dangerous experiment for the enemy if circumstances had not come to the aid of Ludendorff's bold expedient for liquidating the dangers of the Somme battlefield. The heavy losses of the Allies in that battle had produced no visible result beyond the relief of Verdun, and the conclusion of the long struggle was followed by a wave of depression and of discontent with the methods of conducting the war both in Great Britain and France. Mr. Asquith's administration fell, and he was succeeded as Prime Minister by Mr. D. Lloyd George, while in France, Joffre was removed to an honorific sinecure as Marshal of France, and his place was taken by General Nivelle, who had made a great reputation by the success of his attacks which had driven the Germans back from Verdun. Nivelle promised, by developing his methods on a larger scale, a short cut to victory and this promise was hailed enthusiastically by the British and French Governments. At a conference held at Calais at the end of January, Nivelle was given powers analogous to those enjoyed later by Foch, and Haig was required to comply with his instructions. The new plan was for an attempt on a great scale to break through the German front in Champagne, and was to be preceded by two secondary attacks further north, one British and one French. In order to get the troops for the Champagne attack Nivelle required us to take over

an additional twenty miles of front, down to the Amiens-Roye road, and thus it happened that at the very time when the Germans were beginning their retreat we were thinning out our line on the front from which they were retiring. Further, Nivelle did not at first believe that the Germans were doing more than making a local adjustment and refused to modify his plans. This weakening of our front at a critical time and place, together with the difficulties of communication across the shell-torn ground of the battlefield, prevented us from taking full advantage of the situation.

The only division following up the Germans to the Hindenburg line in which there was a battalion of the Regiment was the 18th. This division advanced up the Ancre valley and on March 17th the 7th Battalion had the honour of occupying Achiet-le-Grand. In the fighting in front of that place Private Christopher Cox was awarded the V.C. "for conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty as a stretcher-bearer during operations in front of Achiet-le-Grand on March 15th, 1917 and on subsequent days." A few days later the division was withdrawn and sent north to be ready to take its part in the British share in Nivelle's plan.

After some discussion this share became an attack by parts of our Third and First Armies, under Allenby and Horne respectively, on the Arras-Vimy Ridge front. The French after their failures against the Vimy Ridge were reluctant to allot us so formidable a task as its capture, and it was only Haig's firm refusal to advance against the Hindenburg line, leaving the Ridge on his flank, that resulted eventually in the acceptance of his plan. Our attack, which opened the spring campaign, resulted in the speedy capture of the greater part of the Vimy Ridge by the Canadian Corps with a brigade of the 5th Division attached, both being in Horne's First Army, while Allenby's Third Army made good progress east of Arras.

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By April 14th we had captured 13,000 prisoners and 200 guns, and altogether this was by far our most successful effort in the war up to that time, and we had fully played our part in preparing for Nivelle's main attack.

The only battalion of the Regiment in the front line on April 9th was the 2nd in the 30th Division, which attacked from Mescatel, north of the River Cojeul. In the third week in March the German withdrawal had extended to this sector, and on March 18th the battalion had discovered that the enemy had abandoned Mescatel and had occupied that place. So on April 9th the advance was made from German trenches. Unfortunately, on the eve of the battle Lieut.-Colonel H. S. Poyntz, who had been for some time in poor health, collapsed and was sent home suffering from appendicitis. The command devolved upon Captain R. O. Wynne, D.S.O. The battalion's objective was St. Martin-sur-Cojeul, which was an outpost to this portion of the Hindenburg line, which had to be cleared as a preliminary to the main attack. C and D Companies advanced at 1.30 p.m. and completed what the brigade commander called "A neat little success carried out by the Bedfords in their usual style." The battalion then remained in support, while the remainder of the brigade attacked the enemy's main line. Here the attack made slow progress, as much of the German line was found to be mined, and the weather was atrocious, but early on the 14th, patrols from the battalion found their way into Heninel, which the enemy had abandoned. The battalion was then relieved, having lost Lieut. W. E. Hart and 2nd Lieuts. E. Houseman, B. G. L. Mathews, A. Young, A. Stone, and F. T. Mathews wounded, seventeen other ranks killed, two missing and seventy wounded. Until April 21st it took its turn in the captured German trenches, and then after a month's rest near St. Pol was, in the third week of May, moved north to Ypres.

The 37th Division, in which the 6th Battalion was still serving, was in reserve in Arras itself on April 9th, its task being to pass through the 12th Division south of the railway line to Douai, when that division had completed its task. The advance of the 15th and 12th Divisions immediately east of Arras was at once successful, and there appeared to be a chance of opening a considerable breach in the German line, but when the 37th Division came through to widen the breach a considerable amount of uncut wire was encountered, and between April 10th and 12th progress was slow and costly. The 6th Battalion took a leading part in the capture of La Bergère and succeeded in holding on to its gains, repulsing a number of determined German counter-attacks. Lieuts. G. H. Shaw and F. G. Thompson were killed in this fighting, and Lieuts. H. C. Iredale, F. W. Hedges, H. A. L. Pattison, S. H. Davidson, and J. D. Forman were wounded.

The first phase of the battles of Arras and the Scarpe came to a close on April 14th. They had been designed, as I have said, to prepare the way for Nivelle's main attack in Champagne. When that attack was delivered it failed disastrously, and the heavy losses, which it had caused, together with deep disappointment at Nivelle's failure to redeem his promises, which had aroused lively hopes, produced grave discouragement in the French Army and people. These in May resulted in serious mutinies in the French Army and in a general lowering of its moral, which made the Allied situation on the Western Front highly critical. The first consequence of Nivelle's failure was that Haig was required to continue his attacks in the north beyond the time originally planned, while Nivelle attempted to restore the situation in Champagne, and this resulted in the second battle of the Scarpe. The second consequence was that at the request of Pétain, who succeeded Nivelle as Commander of the French Armies in the middle of May, the British undertook pro-

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longed operations in the north to keep the Germans occupied and to give the new Commander-in-Chief time to restore the moral of the French Army.

The second battle of the Scarpe began on April 23rd, a week after the failure of the French attack in Champagne. It took the form of an attack on a front of nine miles, from Croisilles on the Sensée to Gavrelle, east of the southern end of the Vimy Ridge. Simultaneously with the main attack part of the 5th Division made a subsidiary attack from the north-eastern slopes of the Vimy Ridge. We will begin with this subsidiary attack in the north. It was made against a stronghold which the Germans had established at La Coulotte, and the attack was hurried on because of the French cry for help. The artillery preparation, which owing to the ground was difficult, proved to be entirely inadequate ; and the enemy's counter-barrage was formidable. So though the 1st Battalion and the Norfolks forced their way into the German trenches with rare gallantry, the last of them were forced to retire after ten hours of desperate fighting. The 15th Brigade in this attack lost thirty-six officers and 709 other ranks, and of these, eleven officers and 320 other ranks fell in the 1st Battalion. Lieuts. T. M. K. Fletcher, V. E. Curry, T. Ackroyd and F. D. R. Illingworth were killed ; Captain C. A. S. Morris and Lieut. P. F. Hart died of wounds, and Lieuts. A. F. Woodford, W. M. Stanton, A. J. Fyson, F. Hague and H. A. Deacon were wounded.

The 63rd Division on the north of the main attack was more fortunate, and on April 23rd the 4th Battalion advanced straight through the village of Gavrelle, gaining all its objectives. In its new position it was subjected to a fierce bombardment, but none the less it beat off two German counter-attacks and maintained its hold on the ground it had won. Its losses, too, were heavy and amounted to eighteen officers and 315 other ranks.

On the left of the 63rd, the 37th Division attacked north of the Arras-Douai railway and gained its objectives on the western slopes of Greenland Hill. Throughout the day the 6th battalion was in support, but the German counter-bombardment was so heavy that it lost Lieut. R. V. Colchester killed, and Captains D. H. Blake and F. L. Williams, and Lieuts. N. H. Wilkins, L. T. D. Stables, G. Parsons, and G. B. I. Nokes wounded, the casualties amongst other ranks being ninety.

Though the fighting on the Arras front had reached the stage when losses were altogether out of proportion to gains we were not yet ready to attack on another part of the front, and it was vitally important to give the Germans no time to recover and interfere with Nivelle's preparations for an attack which was to be made in the first week of May, so we began a further series of operations on April 28th north of Monchy-le-Preux. In this fighting the 37th Division attacked Greenland Hill. The 6th Battalion reached its objective without much difficulty, but the Germans were by this time relieved of anxiety as to the situation in Champagne and were free to devote their attention to the Arras front. Our assault was followed by a series of fierce counter-attacks directed against the troops on the left of the 6th Battalion. In these the enemy established themselves in positions from which they could enfilade the wrecked trenches won by the 6th Battalion, which was nearly annihilated. Every officer fell, and when it was relieved only fifty-eight unwounded men came out of action.

Simultaneously the 63rd Division attacked, a little further north, the German trench system about Oppy. For this attack a composite battalion was formed from the 4th Battalion and the 7th Royal Fusiliers, under Lieut.-Colonel J. S. Collings-Wells of the battalion. This battalion attacked at dawn and, like the 6th Battalion, it quickly reached its objective, but it was driven out by a

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counter-attack. It was re-formed and attacked again, and again won its objective, largely owing to the fine leadership and personal gallantry of Lieut.-Colonel J. S. Collings-Wells, who was awarded the D.S.O. This time the 63rd Division succeeded in repulsing a whole series of counter-attacks, maintained until well on into April 29th, when they gradually petered out. On May 3rd, while the Third and First Armies continued to press the enemy on the front east of Arras and the Vimy Ridge, the front of battle was extended southwards by the Fifth Army, which attacked the Hindenburg line about Bullecourt. For this battle the 18th Division had been brought back to the front and went into the line just north of the Sensée. Its task was to carry the German trenches about Cherisy, and the 7th Battalion was on the right of the division's front of attack. Its job was a very difficult one, and things went wrong from the very start. The advance, made in the dark, to the German front line was a long one, the ground was difficult and, owing to faulty synchronisation of watches, the division on the right of the 18th did not start at zero hour. This caused the battalion to lose direction. Four tanks were allotted to assist the attack, but at this period our tanks were still in the experimental stage. One could not start, another was ditched after it had gone a short distance, while a third turned and came back through our lines, adding to the confusion which the loss of direction had begun to cause. Then the German wire in front of Fontaine trench was found to be uncut, and though small parties of the battalion fought their way into the trenches, every man who did so was killed. The Germans brought down a heavy and effective barrage, and all that the battalion could do was to dig in some 400 yards in front of its starting point, having lost fourteen officers and 242 other ranks. For gallant conduct throughout the day Lieut. P. J. Reiss, who was wounded early in the advance, was awarded the M.C. Sergeant

A. Lancaster gained a bar to his M.M. and Private Gladwish the D.C.M. Gladwish was 2nd Lieut. C. B. Kydd's servant, and Kydd was killed in front of Fontaine trench. Gladwish tried to carry him back, but lost his way and found himself on the German side of the trench. For three days and three nights he hid in shell-holes by day, creeping out by night to reconnoitre, though he could easily have given himself up to the Germans ; finally on the third night when nearly desperate from hunger and thirst, he was challenged by a British sentry and was saved.

Throughout May and June a series of minor operations was continued on the Arras front to keep the attention of the Germans fixed there. One of the last of these took place on June 28th. An elaborate dummy attack was staged in the northern part of the Arras battlefield in the direction of Lens. Dummy tanks were brought up, and a large number of dummy men were constructed and raised at zero hour by means of pulleys and ropes. This brought down a very heavy German barrage on the dummies, and under cover of this demonstration the 5th Division attacked the German lines near Oppy, the 1st Battalion carrying Oppy Wood and holding it against counter-attack with the comparatively small loss of two officers and 117 other ranks.

Meanwhile Nivelle's final attack begun on May 5th had failed to produce the hoped for results, and at an Allied conference held in Paris, it was agreed by the French and British Governments that we must continue our attacks in the north. A fortnight later Pétain took Nivelle's place and set to work to deal with the situation caused by the mutiny. On June 7th Plumer's Second Army began our next series of operations with the attack on the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge, but before coming to that we have to account for the 8th Battalion of the Regiment. On moving north from the Somme battle-

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field at the end of 1916, the 6th Division did a brief tour on the Givenchy sector, and then at the end of the year moved into the Loos salient. There on January 29th C Company of the 8th Battalion, under Captain G. D. Brewster, carried out a successful raid in the Hohenzollern Redoubt sector. In the middle of February the division was relieved, and after a short rest took over early in February the right of the Loos Salient from Double Crassier to Railway Alley. By the middle of April the enemy's withdrawal into the Hindenburg line began to extend to this quarter. Just before this happened, on April 3rd, Lieut.-Colonel Lord Ampthill, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., who had left the 3rd Battalion and come out to France in the previous year, arrived and took over the command from Lord Henry Scott, who had been appointed to the Staff. During April 16th and 17th the battalion steadily pressed the retreating Germans back towards Hill 70, and despite a heavy bombardment, C Company, still under Captain G. D. Brewster, captured a machine gun and twenty-seven prisoners. Two German counter-attacks were driven off by the battalion in its new position, and it was then relieved by the 14th D.L.I. On May 19th Lieut.-Colonel Lord Ampthill left, to the general regret of the battalion, to organise the Labour Corps from India, which were just arriving in France, and was succeeded by Major H. R. McCullagh, and he was followed in the middle of June by Major R. Le Huquet. Active patrolling and numerous small raids were the features of this period in the Loos salient, and we may leave the 8th Battalion taking an active share in this work and turn northwards.

The battle of Messines, begun on June 7th by the explosion of nineteen large mines, which had been long prepared under the ridge and had been anxiously watched, was the most encouraging success till then gained by us in the war. No battalion of the Regiment took part in

the actual battle, but the 2nd Battalion, which from the Arras front, had moved up with the 30th Division into the Zillebeke sector of the Ypres salient had a share both in its preparations and its repercussions. On the eve of the battle 2nd Lieut. K. C. Johnston-Jones \* with twenty-four men carried out a brilliant little raid into the enemy's lines and within seven minutes were back in our dugouts with a prisoner, who furnished a most important identification. Their casualties were three men slightly, and one man seriously, wounded. For this feat 2nd Lieut. Johnston-Jones was awarded the M.C. and Corporal Jeeves and Lance-Corporal Preston the M.M. During the forenoon of June 7th the Germans made a counter-attack on the trenches held by the 2nd Battalion and were easily beaten off.

While the battle of Messines was still in progress preparations were pushed on for the greater effort of the third battle of Ypres. This, which was the most terrible experience of the British Army throughout the war, without even excepting the March retreat in 1918, was designed with the double object of driving the enemy from Ostende and Zeebrugge, ports from which the enemy's submarines were devastating our mercantile marine, and of keeping the enemy's attention away from the French Army. As a preliminary we had taken over the coast sector in the dunes of Lombartzyde from the French, while very elaborate preparations were made for a combined naval and military attack on the Belgian coast, the military part in these taking place in a secret camp at Le Clipon, six miles east of Dunkirk. The beginning was not auspicious, for on July 10th the Germans attacked the coast sector, and by a heavy bombardment destroyed the bridges over the Yser, cutting off the 1st Northamptons and 2nd K.R.R., of whom only a small remnant escaped,

\* Now Captain K. C. Johnston-Jones, M.B.E., M.C., Royal Tank Corps.

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while the projected landing came to nothing, for vile weather and the slow progress of the main attack removed any prospect of success.

For the main attack the Fifth Army under General Gough had taken over the Ypres front, and on July 31st the third battle of Ypres began with an attack by nine and one-third British and two French divisions, on the front from Hollebeke to Steenstraat. This first effort was encouraging, as we secured the greater part of the western portion of the Ypres ridges, capturing more than 6,000 prisoners and twenty-five guns. But that afternoon the weather broke and for four days in succession the rain continued, turning the torn ground into a morass. From this time till the end of the battle there never was a sufficient spell of fine weather to dry the soil and our troops had to endure a hell of misery and discomfort which eclipsed even the sufferings of the last days of the battle of the Somme. Of the divisions in which were battalions of the Regiment, only the 30th and the 18th took part in the attack of July 31st. The 30th fought its way through Sanctuary Wood and captured Stirling Castle, the 2nd Battalion being in reserve. It had been intended that the divisional reserve should continue the attack at 5 p.m., but the deluge of rain made artillery preparation and aircraft observation impossible, and the attack was postponed. After a most uncomfortable night in the mud the division was relieved the next day. Lieut.-Colonel C. H. de St. P. Bunbury, who had taken the battalion into action then, fell sick and the command devolved upon Major R. O. Wynne. The battalion had seventy-five casualties from shell fire, 2nd Lieut. C. H. Shaw dying of wounds and 2nd Lieut. T. J. Pemberton being wounded.

It had been intended that the 18th Division should leap-frog through the 30th and extend its success, but only the 53rd Brigade went into action and was soon stopped by mud and rain, so the 54th Brigade in which was the

7th Battalion was not required. On August 1st the 18th Division had relieved the 30th, but the weather entailed a disastrous delay in the operations, which gave the enemy time to organise his defence. Not until August 10th could the attack be renewed, and then only, on a comparatively small scale, by the 18th and 23rd Divisions astride the Menin road. In this enterprise the 7th Battalion and the 11th Royal Fusiliers led the attack of the 54th Brigade. The 7th Battalion advancing close behind our barrage with great dash, still under Lieut.-Colonel G. P. Mills, D.S.O., had in little more than half an hour reached their final objective in Glencorse Wood. Here they were in a very nasty salient, as the attacking troops on their flanks had been held up, nevertheless, they held on and succeeded in consolidating their position before the Germans made a heavy counter-attack, which was beaten off. The battalion this day lost five officers and 279 other ranks. Captain H. Driver, who had already won the D.S.O., won the M.C. for gallant leading ; though severely wounded he continued to inspire his men by his conduct until he collapsed from loss of blood. Captain W. J. W. Colley was awarded a bar to his M.C., and Captain J. A. Vlasto, the battalion Medical Officer, and Lieut. F. Corner,\* the Quartermaster, both won the M.C. Sergeant Peck gained the D.C.M., Corporal Jones and Lance-Corporals Fitzgerald and Spring the M.M.

By the middle of August there was a slight improvement in the weather, and on the 16th an attack was launched by ourselves and the French on the northern portion of the battle front, on either side of Langemarck. In conjunction with this attack an attempt was made to drive the Germans from a strong point in Inverness Copse. For this attack the 7th Battalion, though very weak, was lent to the 56th Division, and it advanced with the 1st/4th London Regiment. The attack failed mainly because

\* Afterwards Captain F. Corner, M.C.

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our artillery could not destroy the enemy's machine guns established in concrete pillboxes. The remnant of the 7th Battalion was then withdrawn out of the line for a month's rest.

Throughout the remainder of August and the whole of September the grim struggle went on, and by the end of the month we had carried our line north of the Menin road to the eastern edge of the Polygon Wood and into Zonnebeke. At the end of September the 5th Division came up into the line and took over the sector between the southern edge of Polygon Wood and the Menin road. Here, between October 1st and 3rd, the Germans made a series of counter-attacks which were repulsed, the 1st Battalion, being in support, had to endure some heavy shelling in the waterlogged shell-holes which served as a support line, but was not called to the front. On October 4th we made a general attack mainly on the front north of the Menin road, which resulted in the capture of Broodseinde. In this operation the 5th Division captured Polderhoek, but was driven out by counter-attack, and five days later another attempt to take the Chateau failed. Though the 1st Battalion was never in the front line during this fighting, lost between October 4th and 10th ten officers and 136 other ranks, an indication of the severity of the enemy's bombardment. The 2nd Battalion during September was in the line in the Wytschaete sector, and on October 1st went back to the Ypres front near Hollebeke, where, as most of the fighting was taking place north of the Menin road, it had a comparatively quiet time.

The long struggle in front of Ypres was now drawing to a close. It was being continued because the collapse of Russia made it more important than ever that the Germans should not be given leisure to attack the French, and because Haig wished to keep them occupied while he was preparing another blow, which it was hoped would

give us some compensation for our heavy losses on the Ypres front. The true reasons for continuing attacks under conditions which made even defence a misery could not be explained to the troops, and their endurance and gallantry in such conditions is beyond praise.

For the last phase of the battle the 18th Division went into the line in front of Poelcapelle, the 63rd Division took over the Padebeek sector on their right, while the 5th Division still held the line in front of Polderhoek Chateau. During the capture of Poelcapelle by the 18th Division the 7th Battalion was in reserve and saw no fighting. The division was relieved on October 26th, and then went into the extreme left of our line, where it passed a most unpleasant winter in Houthoult Forest. The 1st Battalion was again in support while the 5th Division made a final and again unsuccessful attempt to take Polderhoek Chateau on October 26th. That evening it went into the front line and remained alternately in the line and in support until November 10th, losing in this spell five officers and 105 other ranks, 2nd Lieut. A. E. Croockewit being killed.

On October 30th the 63rd Division attacked from the Padebeek towards Westroosebeck, the 4th Battalion being in the front line. The condition of the ground was appalling, the men being often up to their knees in mud, and it is therefore surprising that any progress was made at all. The battalion, however, succeeded in making some ground, and the part played by the 63rd Division on this day helped materially towards the capture of Passchendaele by the Canadians on November 6th, which brought the battle to a close.

In the fighting of October 30th the 4th Battalion lost Captain L. C. T. Gate and 2nd Lieut. A. E. Tee killed, Captain J. Scott, Lieuts. H. C. Wareing and K. V. R. Gold and 2nd Lieuts S. A. Glossop, C. Bornet, F. J. C. Ivey and G. M. Radwell wounded. Lieut. H. C. Wareing later

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died of wounds. Fifty-two other ranks were killed, 150, wounded, and twenty-three were missing. For their part in the Passchendaele struggle Lieut.-Colonel J. S. Collings-Wells, D.S.O., 2nd Lieut. J. H. Blackwell, Sergeants Pearce and Marks were mentioned in dispatches, while Sergeant Turner, Corporal Scruby and Privates Holdom, Cooper and Ruggles won the M.M.

The 2nd, 4th, 6th and 7th Battalions remained on the Ypres front until the end of the year. About the middle of December Lieut.-Colonel H. S. Poyntz rejoined the 2nd Battalion from sick leave, only to find that Lieut.-Colonel E. I. de S. Thorpe had already been posted to the command of the battalion. The difficulty was adjusted by giving Colonel E. I. de S. Thorpe command of the 1st Battalion, whence he was soon promoted to command a brigade, and Colonel H. S. Poyntz resumed command of the battalion which he had gallantly led on the Somme.

The 6th Battalion in the 37th Division, after its very heavy losses at Greenland Hill, was given some time to reorganise, and was put into quiet sectors of the line. The unusual entry appears in its war diary "casualties in June nil." Until well on into September the battalion spent most of its time in the Kemmel sector, but towards the end of the month the 37th Division took over the line south of the Menin road on the right of the 5th Division. The 6th Battalion was not engaged in the front line in any of the battles which took place between October 1st and November 10th, but it had as unpleasant experiences of the Ypres front as most other battalions, and the end of the year found it in the line near Hollebeke.

Meantime preparations were well advanced for that other blow which Haig had in mind. In the third week of October the 6th Division was relieved in the Loos salient, and at the end of the month joined the Third Army, then under General Byng. For the first fortnight

of November the 8th Battalion was engaged in training with tanks, no one except the Commanding Officer, Lieut.-Colonel R. Le Huquet knowing what was intended. The evening of November 19th found the battalion on the Cambrai front on the left of the front line of the 71st Brigade just north of Villers Plouich, and then for the first time the men learned what their task was to be. The attack was launched without any preliminary bombardment, three tanks being allotted to each of the leading companies of the battalion. On the greater part of the front of battle our advance was successful, and the main Hindenburg line was pierced. On the front of the 6th Division the whole operation went like clockwork. The 8th Battalion reached its final objective quickly and captured five officers, including a battalion commander, and 200 other prisoners. Its losses were 2nd Lieuts. H. F. R. Amesbury and H. N. F. Forge killed, 2nd Lieuts. E. D. G. Northcroft and T. Dunn wounded, ten other ranks killed and thirty-eight wounded.

Unfortunately events elsewhere diverted the reserves, which might have completed and improved the success of the first attack in the battle of Cambrai. On October 24th the Italian front was broken at Caporetto, and the situation there quickly developed into a disaster of the first magnitude. We and the French were directed to send each five divisions to restore the situation in Italy, and amongst those to go was the 5th Division. The 1st Battalion, which had left the Ypres front on November 11th, entrained for Italy just a month later, and eventually went into the line on the Piave, on which river the enemy's pursuit of the Italians had been stopped.

The effect of the weakening of the Western Front at a critical time was quickly felt on the Cambrai battlefield. On November 30th the enemy launched heavy counter-attacks against the flanks of the salient which our advance had created, and broke through on the right of our

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battle front. Continuing his attacks, he on December 3rd began to force back our centre, and had driven it over the St. Quentin Canal at Marcoing when A and B companies of the 8th battalion were ordered to counter-attack. These companies advancing through a heavy barrage, drove back the Germans, regained possession of the bridges over the canal and held on to the canal line until, on the evening of December 4th, they were ordered back. Owing to the situation of the flanks, withdrawal from the front was unavoidable to straighten out our line. The action of these two companies, commanded respectively by Second Lieutenant L. Dolman and Captain W. T. Pares, was described by the divisional commander in a special order of the day "as worthy of the best traditions of the 6th Division and of the British Army."

We now leave the mud and rain of Flanders for a drier and sunnier clime. The 54th Division, in which was the 5th Battalion under Lieut.-Colonel E. W. Brighten, less one brigade and some artillery left in the Suez Canal defences, had reached El Arish on February 23rd, 1917. At that time Sir Archibald Murray had received instructions to send another division to France, and the 42nd Division was sent off. He was told that in view of the situation on the Western Front, operations on any large scale in Palestine were to be deferred to the autumn, but that he was to make during the summer all preparations for such a campaign. Six miles south of Gaza the Wadi Ghuzze flows into the sea. It formed the natural southern boundary of Palestine, and General Murray saw that preparation for the autumn campaign would be much facilitated if he was in possession of the springs of the Wadi, and a bridge to carry his railway could be thrown over it, while his hold on the Wadi would be more secure if Gaza could be seized.

Early in March the force on the frontier of Palestine was organised in a desert column under General Chet-

wode,\* consisting of 2 mounted divisions each of 3 brigades, the 53rd Division, less 1 brigade and 2 light car patrols, and in the Eastern force under General Dobell † (who commanded the 2nd Battalion in 1912) consisting of the Imperial Camel Brigade, the 52nd and 54th Divisions, less 1 brigade, and a new 74th (Yeomanry) Division consisting of 2 brigades without artillery. The only army artillery available was six 60-pounders. Thus the mounted troops numbered about 11,000, the infantry 20,000 rifles, and the guns 92. The Turks who had withdrawn into a defensive line extending from Beersheba to Gaza were believed to have on that front, 15,000 rifles and from 40 to 50 guns.

The attack on Gaza took place on March 26th. The mounted troops began to cross the Wadi Ghuzze at 5 a.m., and were followed by the 53rd Division, which with a brigade from the 54th Division was to make the assault on the town. The 54th Division, less this Brigade, was echeloned on the right of the 53rd, and the 52nd Division was in reserve. At dawn the whole front of battle was enveloped in a dense sea fog. This, while it concealed the movement of the mounted troops, caused a grave delay to the infantry, for the commander of the 53rd Division, fearful of losing direction, halted for two fatal hours. Thus the assault of the two brigades of the 53rd Division was not delivered until mid-day, and was then held up by dense cactus hedges on the outskirts of Gaza. Meanwhile the mounted troops had worked round to the north of the town, and at 4 p.m. the Imperial Mounted Division had fought their way into Gaza. Almost at the same time the 161st Brigade, attached to the 53rd Division, assaulted, and by 5.30 p.m. had carried Green Hill, which commanded the south-

\* Now General Sir Philip Chetwode, Bart., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., D.S.O., A.D.C.

† Now Lieut.-General Sir Charles M. Dobell, K.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

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eastern exits of the town. The enemy was surrounded, and our men were fighting in the streets of Gaza when, after the short Eastern twilight, night closed in and the order came to withdraw. Generals Dobell and Chetwode had agreed that if the town were not taken by nightfall the attack should be abandoned, as the troops had not with them enough water for a prolonged struggle. They were confirmed in this decision by the fact that about 4 p.m. Turkish reinforcements were reported to be advancing on Gaza, and no news of our success in the town had reached them. So we abandoned the struggle when victory was within our reach.

The 5th Battalion in reserve had been spectators of the fighting. Then when night fell the 162nd Brigade was ordered forward to cover the withdrawal. It advanced, the 5th Battalion leading, and despite the difficulties of the ground, by 10 p.m. it was in touch with the 53rd Division and dug in. On the 27th the brigade had the difficult task of withdrawing behind the Wadi Ghuzze, on which our new line was established. This withdrawal was skilfully carried out by the 5th Battalion with trifling loss.

Sir Archibald Murray wired home a somewhat optimistic account of the first battle of Gaza, which left a misleading impression on the authorities at home. On March 11th, Maude had entered Baghdad in triumph ; the Russian revolution had just broken out, the German retreat to the Hindenburg line was in progress, and it seemed highly improbable that our chief enemy would be able to help his ally. The moment seemed to have arrived to press the Turks, while Russian forces were still in the field against them. So on March 30th, Murray was instructed to defeat the Turks south of Jerusalem and occupy that city. He replied that for this he would require five complete divisions, but hoped with the troops he had to capture Gaza by more deliberate methods.

So the preparations for the second battle of Gaza went forward. For this battle Murray was able to increase his artillery to 170 guns, but of these only twelve were medium and heavy artillery, an entirely inadequate amount for the preparation of a deliberate attack. It was hoped to make good this deficiency by a bombardment from the sea by the French battleship *Requin* and two of our monitors, while a few tanks were available. But if we had been reinforced so had the Turks, who had available more than 18,000 rifles and 101 guns, and had been given time to strengthen their positions. Lack of facilities for the transport of water prevented any turning movement, and the attack was purely frontal. The infantry was to advance on April 17th and secure the Mansurah Ridge within striking distance of the Turkish lines. The 18th was to be spent in final preparations for the assault. The bombardment was to begin at 5.30 a.m. on the 19th, and at 7.15 a.m. the 53rd Division was to advance along the coast, while the 54th and 52nd Divisions assaulted the Turkish trenches east of Gaza, and the mounted troops demonstrated on their flanks.

The advance of the 54th and 52nd Divisions on the 17th met with little opposition ; by 7 p.m. the 5th Battalion was successfully entrenched on the Mansurah Ridge. The 18th was passed in preparation as planned, the 5th Battalion being withdrawn in to brigade resting for the attack on the 19th. It therefore had the good fortune to escape from an assault which, owing to inadequate artillery preparation, had no chance of success. The infantry attack though made with great gallantry failed everywhere, and just before nightfall the 5th Battalion was ordered forward to relieve the Northamptons in the firing line. The advance was made under heavy fire, and the battalion eventually established itself in a line of rifle pits, which it held until the night of the 21st, when it was ordered back to the new line which

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we had established east of the Wadi Ghuzze. The battalion casualties were Second Lieutenant L. L. Brereton died of wounds, Lieutenant H. Wilkin wounded, the casualties in other ranks numbering forty.

On June 29th, General Allenby \* succeeded General Murray in command on the Palestine front, and he at once wired home for reinforcements. Accordingly, during the summer his army was increased to three mounted divisions and a mounted brigade, seven divisions organised in two corps, a total of about 17,000 sabres, 75,000 rifles and 475 guns. In this reorganisation the 54th Division became part of the 21st Corps under General Bulfin. All ranks passed a strenuous summer in preparation for the autumn campaign. Practice in turning out quickly and in marching on short rations of water was constant, while great efforts were made to increase the mobility of the army and to arrange for the carriage of sufficient water to allow of a turning movement against the enemy's lines. While all this was going on the 5th Battalion on July 20th and 27th carried out two highly successful raids on Umbrella Hill, both under the command of Captain H. S. Armstrong, who had himself trained the raiders. Allenby published an Army Order, complimenting the battalion on these raids, directing that it should be read to all units on three parades. For this work Captain H. S. Armstrong was given the M.C. and promoted to the command of a battalion. Major C. H. Miskin,† who was in command of the reserve company during the first raid and was wounded, also won the M.C., and Sergeant Sharpe the D.C.M., while sixteen of the rank and file gained Military Medals.

The attack on the Gaza-Beersheba front was planned

\* Now Field-Marshall Viscount Allenby, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.

† Now Lieut.-Colonel C. H. Miskin, M.C., commanding the 5th Battalion.

for October 31st, and was to begin with a turning movement against Beersheba by the Desert Mounted Corps and the 20th Corps under Chetwode, to be followed by an attack on Gaza by the 21st Corps under Bulfin. Despite the most elaborate arrangements for the transport of water, it was impossible to carry enough for prolonged operations, and therefore the complete success of the plan depended upon finding the wells at Beersheba intact. The turning movement was therefore made in great strength, and was carried through with the utmost rapidity. Meanwhile every effort was made to attract the attention of the Turks to Gaza. The attack on Beersheba was completely successful, and by dusk the place was in our hands with the wells intact, its defenders, the 27th Turkish Division, being almost annihilated. Chetwode who was in charge of the turning movement, was then well placed to roll up the Turkish flank, but for the complete attainment of Allenby's object it remained to carry the strong Turkish defences about Gaza. The bombardment of these defences from land and sea had begun on October 27th, and had confirmed in the minds of the Turks the information sedulously spread by our Intelligence Service that our main attack would be on the town. The assault on Gaza was entrusted to the 54th Division with the 156th Brigade of the 52nd Division attached. That brigade opened the ball by carrying, at 11.30 p.m. on November 1st, the 5th Battalion's old acquaintance, Umbrella Hill. Then came the turn of the 54th Division which advanced after ten minutes' intense bombardment.

The 5th Battalion went into position on the sand dunes on October 31st, and there on the morning of November 1st enjoyed the unusual preliminary to a battle of a bathing parade, a tale which may some day rival that of the toilet of Leonidas' Spartans, if we can find an Herodotus to tell the story of the Great War. Zero hour was 3 a.m.

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on November 2nd, and just before the cheering news of the capture of Umbrella Hill. The battalion's first task was to leap-frog through the 11th Londons and rush the Turkish trenches on Tomb Spur. This the Bedfords, advancing close up to the barrage, accomplished with little loss. From Tomb Spur to the final objective, Sheik Hassan, an enclosure in the dunes parallel with the northern edge of Gaza, more resistance was encountered, and men began to fall. The tanks, which were to have helped in this phase, were late, being delayed by the soft sand, but in spite of this, Sheik Hassan was captured by 6.30 a.m., and there for the remainder of the day the battalion came in for heavy shelling.

The capture of Gaza made the victory complete, for not only did the attack on the town pin down the Turkish garrison, but it attracted to the place reinforcements which would otherwise have checked the development of the turning movement. As it was, Chetwode was able on November 6th to overwhelm the Turkish left at Kuweilfeh and Sheria, and the next day the enemy was in full retreat.

After the capture of Sheik Hassan, the 5th Battalion occupied the north-western defences of Gaza, and advancing thence early on the 7th, C Company drove a Turkish rearguard from Turtle Hill, and A Company the next day captured two 4.2 guns, one of which is now at Luton, the other at Bedford. In its attack the battalion had taken thirteen officers and 140 men prisoners, eight machine guns and large quantities of ammunition and stores. Its losses were Second Lieutenant E. A. Phillips of the Royal Berkshire Regiment attached to the battalion, killed, Second Lieutenant G. H. Pinchin, died of wounds, and thirty other ranks killed or died of wounds. The wounded numbered 190.

While Chetwode's forces were driving the enemy northwards through the coastal region of Palestine, the difficulties of supply kept back the 54th Division until

arrangements could be made for landing stores on the coast, and it was not until November 19th that the 5th Battalion reached Ludd. There the 54th Division and the Anzac Division were allotted the task of forming a defensive line on the plain, covering the communications, while the remainder of the army advanced eastwards against Jerusalem. In its position in the plain, the battalion distinguished itself in two skirmishes at Nabala Hill on November 30th, and Yaffa Hill on December 20th.

Meantime, Jerusalem had fallen on December 9th, and Allenby's army spent its Christmas in the Holy Land in the happy consciousness of having brilliantly accomplished its task.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE GREAT WAR, 1918

THE winter of 1917-18 was an anxious one on the Western Front. The collapse of Russia was complete, and German divisions were arriving in France and Belgium from the Eastern front at the rate of about one a week, while it would be several months before the American Army was ready for active work. Signs began to multiply that the enemy was strenuously preparing for a great attack. The British and French Armies had been weakened by the dispatch of ten divisions to Italy, and the French insisted that we should take over more line. So early in the year the Fifth Army was transferred from the Ypres front to the right of our line, where it took over an additional twenty-eight miles of front down to Barisis. Both the 2nd and 7th Battalions were affected by this change, the 30th Division being transferred to the St. Quentin front, and the 18th leaving the damp of Houthulst Forest for the neighbourhood of Noyon.

Unfortunately, Haig received no reinforcements to compensate for this addition to our task. The British Government, eager to obtain some compensation for the defensive policy which the situation enforced in the west, refused to allow troops to be transferred from Palestine to France, and it was loth to extend the application of the Compulsory Service Acts. The heavy losses of the third battle of Ypres could not be made good, and the abolition of some of our infantry battalions became necessary if the remainder were to be kept approximately up to strength.

In the British divisions, each brigade was therefore reduced to three battalions. On January 20th the Commander-in-Chief wrote to his army commanders :—

“ The situation with regard to man power has rendered it impossible to maintain all the units in the field, and in consequence the Army Council have issued orders that a large number of battalions must be broken up. I wish through you to convey to the Commanders and all ranks of the Battalions about to be disbanded, my great regret that this step should have been found necessary. I know how deeply officers and men will feel the severance of the ties binding them to the Unit, in which they have served and fought with such splendid gallantry and success, and with which they hoped eventually to return home after the great struggle had been won and their tasks achieved. But I know that since this reorganisation has to be, it will be accepted with the loyalty and devotion with which every trial has been met by British officers and men throughout the war.

“ Please convey to the officers and other ranks concerned my deep appreciation of their services in the past, and my confidence that they will accept this disappointment in the right spirit and will give to the new units to which they are transferred the same devotion and esprit de corps that they have given to those they have been with until now.”

This news came as a bolt from the blue to the 8th Battalion, which as the junior service battalion of the Regiment was selected for disbandment. Beginning on February 7th, the officers and other ranks were distributed between the 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th Battalions, the orderly room was closed on February 16th, and the battalion ceased to exist.

The reorganisation affected one other battalion of the Regiment, the 2nd, which was transferred from the 89th Brigade, with which it had fought since leaving the 7th

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Division, to the 90th, but it still remained in the 30th Division.

The great German attack on the Fifth and Third Armies, begun on March 21st, had been long foreseen. Haig's Intelligence Department had correctly forecast not only the front but the actual time of the attack, but the Germans obtained some degree of surprise by their methods. These consisted in a short and very intense bombardment of our front line, while our back areas were drenched with poison gas, mainly mustard gas. The attack was led by specially trained groups of men with machine guns and light mortars, who filtered in between our posts and were followed by the mass of the enemy's infantry.

Beginning the story of the Regiment's part in the battle from the right, the 54th Brigade of the 18th Division was on the morning of March 21st in the battle zone, with the 7th Battalion in brigade reserve north of Remigny. An exceptionally dry winter enabled the Germans to get across the valley of the Oise, which is normally marshy, without difficulty, while a dense fog hampered our arrangements for defence. Despite this, the Germans on the 21st were not able to do more on the front of the 18th Division than drive in the outpost line. But against the 14th Division on the left of the 18th they had been more successful, and to escape from its exposed position the division was ordered to retire during the night behind the St. Crozat Canal. There on the 22nd a fierce fight took place for the canal crossings. The 7th Battalion was in the front line near the Montaigne Bridge. The Germans forced their way over the canal, and at one time, as they were within about 200 yards of battalion headquarters, Lieut.-Colonel A. E. Percival and his adjutant, Captain H. C. Browning destroyed all maps and papers. Then the situation was restored by a gallant counter-attack by three companies of the Northants and

one of the Bedfords, and the enemy was driven back. Captain H. C. Browning, for gallant leading in this counter-attack, was awarded the M.C. But though the 18th Division had stopped the Germans on the canal, the divisions on the flank were still being forced back, and the retreat had to be continued. The heavy artillery and particularly the mustard gas were taking a heavy toll of the battalion, and by the evening of March 23rd it could muster no more than six officers and 200 men. By this time French troops and other reinforcements had begun to arrive, but they could do no more than check slightly the enemy's progress. On March 24th the division was re-formed on either side of Caillouel to cover the withdrawal of the French and our 1st Cavalry Division who were fighting in the front line. But from this position the situation on the flanks again necessitated retirement, and March 25th found the division in position about Babouf, with the 54th Brigade on its left. There the situation quickly became critical, for the Germans were pushing in between the 53rd Brigade and the French, and had entered Babouf. At this moment Brig.-General Sadleir Jackson decided to counter-attack, and though nearly exhausted by five days of constant retreating and fighting, the men nobly responded. The 7th Battalion advanced on the left of the brigade front with the Royal Fusiliers on their right and the Northamptons in support. Babouf was carried with surprising ease for the Germans were nearing the end of their tether. Ten machine guns were captured and 230 prisoners taken. This was a notable effort, and it put an end to the enemy's progress in this quarter of the battlefield, but it exhausted the fighting capacity of the 18th Division, and on the 26th what remained of it was withdrawn.

The experiences on the front of the 30th Division were on March 21st very similar to those of the 18th Division. The 2nd Battalion was in the division's battle zone on the

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St. Quentin sector near Savy, Lieut.-Colonel H. S. Poyntz being in temporary command of the 90th Brigade, and the battalion under Major R. O. Wynne, D.S.O.\* The fog at daybreak was as dense as it was further south, and the Germans' method of attack was the same. The enemy during the forenoon worked their way through the forward zone, and by noon began to attack the battalion's positions in the battle zone. By dusk the Germans had gained a footing in one of A Company's trenches. A counter-attack failed to turn them out, but elsewhere the attack had been beaten off. Throughout the 23rd, the attack on the battle zone was pressed in great strength, C Company's trenches were carried, but A and B Companies held on doggedly until surrounded, and only a small remnant escaped. In the afternoon the brigades on the flanks were driven back, and the 90th Brigade was ordered to retire on Ham, where on the 23rd it went into reserve behind the Somme. There the 2nd Battalion took up position just east of Verlaines to cover the withdrawal of the 89th Brigade from Ham. Early on the 24th a further withdrawal was ordered behind the Canal du Nord, and the battalion was given the task of defending the bridge at Buverchy. The 30th Division was by then reduced to two weak brigades, and the 2nd Battalion to seven officers and 134 other ranks. The enemy's advance was checked on the Canal du Nord until French reinforcements came up, but the Germans put in a heavy attack during the afternoon, and forced their way over the canal on the battalion's right, and a further retirement back to Solente had to be made under heavy fire. At Solente the battalion found buses waiting to take it back through Roye to Arvillers, where it had a short rest. Early on the 26th it was ordered to take up a position about Bouchoir. There on the 27th it was heavily attacked, and again had to withdraw, as the Germans had driven

\* Later Lieut.-Colonel R. O. Wynne, D.S.O.

in the troops on its flanks. Its last stand was made on the Arvillers-Folie Road, and there it was at last relieved on March 28th by French troops. Between March 21st and 28th it had lost fifteen officers and 554 other ranks, and had never abandoned a position until ordered to do so.

The remaining battalion of the Regiment involved in the March battles, the 4th, was on March 21st with the 63rd Division on the very front over which the 8th Battalion had advanced in the first battle of Cambrai. In the days preceding the German attack, it was in the support line of the Cambrai sector opposite to Marcoing. This sector was heavily bombarded from March 12th onwards with mustard gas shell, and before the attack was launched the battalion had lost five officers and 264 other ranks. On March 21st the Germans made little progress on the front of the 63rd Division, but as it was at the head of the salient which we had created in the first battle of Cambrai and the divisions on the flanks had been pressed back, it was ordered to retire during the night to the intermediate line. This was the beginning of a fighting retirement through Ytres, Gueudecourt and Martinpuich. From near the latter place the battalion was ordered up to High Wood on March 26th to reinforce the 189th Brigade, which was being hard pressed in front of Martinpuich. There the battalion hung on until its ammunition was exhausted, and its gallant conduct saved the flank of the division. The withdrawal of the battalion from its exposed position was made possible by the devotion of Lieutenant J. H. Blackwell, who when the commanding officer, Lieut.-Colonel J. S. Collings-Wells, D.S.O., called for volunteers to cover the retreat, took charge of three officers and sixty other ranks. Lieut.-Colonel J. S. Collings-Wells himself posted this small party moving about with the utmost disregard of danger, encouraging his men by his fine example, and after he had left to look after the placing of the main body of the

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battalion, Lieutenant J. H. Blackwell remained until every round was expended, and was the last to leave the position. Under cover of this devoted little band, the battalion made good its retreat to the Thiepval Ridge, whence in the early hours of March 26th it was withdrawn behind the Ancre. There the division was relieved by the 12th Division, and the battalion was withdrawn to Martinsart. But its rest was short. During the night of the 26th-27th, the enemy had crossed the Ancre and gained possession of Albert, threatening to turn the flank of the 12th Division. So the remnant of the 63rd Division was ordered up to form a defensive flank at Bouzincourt. There the battalion was placed near the 25th Brigade, and was ordered to make a counter-attack with the 1st Artists Rifles at 7.30 a.m. on the 27th.

This counter-attack drove the enemy back to the railway line and put an end to the enemy's progress in this quarter. The battalion was gloriously led by Lieut.-Colonel J. S. Collings-Wells. He, knowing that his men were nearly dead beat after six days of fighting with very little sleep, led the counter-attack in person, and though wounded, continued to cheer his men on until he fell killed just as the railway was reached. He was awarded a posthumous V.C., and few (if any) were better won throughout the war.

During the night the enemy made a final attempt to continue his progress, but was repulsed, and Lieutenant L. Hambling won the Military Cross for gallantry in this action. The battalion was then definitely relieved, and went back to rest. For gallant conduct during the retreat, Sergeant W. G. Marks, Lance-Corporals W. Batchelor and P. Le Gros, and Private W. E. Auburn were awarded the Military Medal. The battalion's casualties, in addition to those suffered from mustard gas before the attack, were nineteen officers and 233 other ranks.

Though the enemy's main effort was definitely checked

by the end of March, the struggle was far from over. The enemy was still making desperate efforts to reach Amiens, and we were barely holding him up with a scratch force on the Villers-Brettoneux-Hangard front. To reinforce this line, what was left of the 18th Division was brought up in buses on March 30th. By that time our Fifth Army had ceased to exist as a fighting force, and the defence of Amiens was taken over by Sir Henry Rawlinson, who gradually re-formed the troops under him as the Fourth Army. On April 1st, the 7th Battalion was at Gentelles behind Hangard in support, and the next evening an attempt was made to drive the enemy from the Aubercourt Ridge east of Hangard by a counter-attack with one company of the 7th Battalion and one company of the 11th Royal Fusiliers. The attempt failed, the 7th Battalion's Company losing all its officers and sixty other ranks. Thereafter the battalion remained in support at Gentelles until the 54th Brigade was relieved by the Australians on the night of the 5th-6th.

During the winter, the 6th Battalion had remained in the Ypres sector in the 37th Division, but on the development of the German attack, the division was moved down to the Somme front and reached the Gommecourt sector on April 1st, just as the front was being stabilised. The 6th Battalion went into the line at Rossignol Wood until April 9th, during which period it lost five officers and 101 other ranks, mainly from shell fire.

On April 9th a fresh crisis developed, for the Germans attacking on the Neuve Chapelle front, drove in the Portuguese divisions and quickly opened a wide gap. This brought the 1st Battalion again into action on the Western Front. It had passed a quiet and pleasant winter in Italy, where on February 2nd it had gone into the line on the Piave near Nervesa. There elaborate preparations were made for crossing the river and attacking the Austrians on the other side. This adventure

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was to have been made on March 2nd, but fortunately the Italians asked for a postponement of twenty-four hours ; fortunately, for during the night the river came down in flood and swept away all the material prepared for the crossing. If the raid across the river had been made as planned, few of the 15th Brigade would ever have got back across the Piave. When the crisis of the spring developed on the Western Front, it was agreed that two of our divisions should go back to France, and of these the 5th was one. It reached Neuvelette on April 8th, and was preparing to go into the line south of Arras when the news of the enemy's break through at Neuve Chapelle diverted it northwards. The 1st Battalion arrived just in time to take part in the defence of the Forest of Nieppe, where the enemy's advance on Hazebrouck was stopped. The battalion remained in the forest until the end of July, losing in the four months eleven officers and 199 other ranks. Amongst the officer casualties was Major W. H. L. Barnett, D.S.O., who was severely wounded for the third time. In a raid, made by a party under Captain F. Hague on April 26th, twelve prisoners and a machine gun were captured. Captain F. Hague was wounded in the thigh, but remained in action until he had seen all his men back. On April 27th the enemy attacked but was beaten off, Second Lieutenant A. E. Peel being killed, and Captain W. White, M.M., wounded, the casualties in the other ranks numbering eighteen. Thereafter the battalion had a fairly quiet time until it was our turn to press the Germans back.

After its heavy losses in March, the 30th Division had been moved down for a short rest on the coast at the mouth of the Somme, and thence it went up to Ypres to take over a sector on the Passchendaele Ridge. There on April 12th the 2nd Battalion, to the regret of all ranks, said good-bye to its tried friend, Major and Quartermaster H. Cressingham, who had served with it from the

beginning of the war. He went home to an appointment at the Depôt.

In consequence of the enemy's break through on the Lys, it was decided to withdraw from the Passchendaele Ridge, and the battalion retired to a line behind Langemarck, where it was relieved by the Belgians on the night of April 17th-18th. Owing to the weakness of the 30th Division, it was then reorganised and a 21st Composite Brigade \* was formed in which No. 1 Battalion was composed of the 2nd Battalion formed as two companies, and the 2nd Wiltshire also formed as two companies. The 21st Brigade went into the line astride the Ypres-Commines Canal at the Bluff on April 19th, and on April 25th when the Germans drove the French out of Kemmel Hill, the 1st Composite Battalion under Lieut.-Colonel R. O. Wynne was holding the line from the Bluff to the Caterpillar. There on the 26th it was heavily attacked by the enemy, anxious to extend his success at Kemmel. The Bluff was held until late in the evening mainly owing to the skill and gallantry of a platoon of the 2nd Battalion under Second Lieutenant P. A. Page (now deceased), and this stout defence undoubtedly saved the right flank of the brigade when it was ordered to fall back to a line extending from Voormezeele to the Etang de Zillebeke. In this action, Second Lieutenant P. A. Page won the M.C., and Privates Scripps, White, Coles and Fretwell, the Military Medal. The battalion's casualties numbered 107.

After this hard fight there was little of the 30th Division left, and the remnant was organised into the 30th Brigade, in which the 2nd Battalion absorbed what was left of the 2nd Wiltshire, Lieut.-Colonel R. O. Wynne, D.S.O., continuing in command. This reorganised brigade was attached on May 2nd to the 49th Division, and on May 6th it took over our line south of Ridge Wood and opposite

\* The 2nd Battalion and the 2nd Wiltshire had both formed part of the original 21st Brigade, 7th Division.

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Vierstraat, with French troops on its right. On May 8th the Germans put in a heavy attack on this front, capturing Ridge Wood on the left, and driving back the French on the right. This attack was part of an attempt by the enemy to take the Scherpenberg ; he failed in his main object, but on the Vierstraat front we were driven back to the support line, the 2nd Battalion having a hard time as the retirement of the French had exposed their flank. A counter-attack by French troops, with which the 2nd Battalion co-operated, was delivered in the evening, and at first had some success, but it was in turn driven back by a German counter-attack. This ended the part of the 2nd Battalion in the battles of the spring of 1918. In this fight it had lost seven officers and 170 other ranks. Second Lieutenant F. C. Baldwin died of wounds, Second Lieutenants W. F. Billingham and A. J. H. Rodgers were wounded, and Second Lieutenant A. H. Baker was missing. The battalion had been in very truth tried in the fire, and not found wanting. The battalion with what was left of the 30th Brigade was sent back to the sea coast west of Abbeville, and there after a rest it assisted in the training of an American division.

While the battle in the north was drawing to its close, the enemy in the south made one more determined attempt to break through to Amiens. On April 24th he attacked on the Villers-Brettoneux front with four divisions supported by tanks, the first appearance of these on the German side. He succeeded in gaining possession of Villers-Brettoneux, but was then checked on the edge of the wood just west of that place by a counter-attack delivered by the 8th Division. The 54th Brigade was at this time near Gentelles on the left of the 8th Division, with the 5th Australian Division in support. Major-General Sir J. T. Hobbs, commanding that division, realised the vital importance of turning the Germans out of Villers-Brettoneux, as from the ridge near that place they could

command the main road right on to Amiens. He promptly organised a counter-attack which was delivered at 10 p.m. by his own division on the left and centre, and by the 54th Brigade on the right, and early on the 25th the whole of Villers-Brettoneux was again in our hands.

In this vital success the 7th Battalion played a notable part. It was temporarily under the command of its adjutant, Captain H. C. Browning. An improvised counter-attack in the dark is a ticklish business ; the only guide to direction was our barrage, and this was soon confused by the German counter-barrage, which twice blew in battalion headquarters. The battalion was largely composed of nineteen-year-old boys who had been rushed out from England to replace losses, and splendidly they behaved in conditions which would have tried the most experienced. By the time that the battalion had made some progress towards Cachy, all the company commanders had fallen. Captains O. Kingdon, A. B. McBride and C. A. Lawrence were killed, Lieutenant H. F. Trewman was wounded. Only two officers were left, Second Lieutenants E. J. Scott and W. Tysoe, and Scott was wounded and taken prisoner early on the 25th when the battalion was almost surrounded. The defence of the ground won, on which the security of the right flank of the counter-attack depended, then devolved on Tysoe, who made Company Sergeant-Major Kirby his second in command ; and these two encouraged their young soldiers by their fine example. A demand for surrender, accompanied by the statement that the Bedfords were surrounded by two divisions, was contemptuously refused, and at dusk Tysoe finished the day gloriously by counter-attacking a German attempt to retake his position. At dawn on the 26th he was relieved by the Moroccan Division, having won the D.S.O. The announcement of the award said : "The fine example of gallantry and leadership by this young officer was entirely instrumental in holding the

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ground gained, with many young soldiers, who were in action for the first time." Sergeants Holloway, Robinson and Boness won the D.C.M. Private Bailey the bar to his M.M., and Privates Millward and Hughes the M.M. Thus memorably did the 7th Battalion complete its task in the repulse of the great German offensive.

At the end of May the enemy turned his attention to the French, and left us in comparative peace. This gave us an invaluable breathing space for reorganisation. Reinforcements hurried to France from Palestine and Salonika enabled us to fill many of the gaps which the tremendous losses we had suffered since March 21st had caused. But not all of them could be filled, and the recruiting resources of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire had been strained to the limit. During the reorganisation the 6th Battalion was absorbed into the 1st Hertfordshire Regiment, and the 2nd Battalion was moved into the 18th Division and absorbed the 7th. The 8th Battalion had, as I have said, disappeared before the March attacks. So the Regiment entered upon the final stage of the war on the Western Front with the 1st Battalion in the 5th Division in the Forest of Nieppe, the 2nd Battalion in the 18th Division in the Albert sector, and the 4th Battalion in the 63rd Division opposite Achiet-le-Grand.

Before completing the story of the Regiment's work on the Western Front, we must go back to the 5th Battalion, which we had left holding the coastal plain during the capture of Jerusalem. In the third week of December, our front in the plain had been pushed forward north of Jaffa beyond the River Auja, and there it settled down for the winter. The prime object of the advance to Jerusalem had been achieved. The Turkish reinforcements intended to drive us out of Baghdad had been diverted to Palestine, and our army in Mesopotamia had been relieved of all danger. The British Cabinet was

eager to complete the conquest of Palestine, and it was proposed to transfer to Allenby three divisions from Mesopotamia and an Indian cavalry division from France, and to provide him with other reinforcements to enable him to resume the offensive. While these plans were still being discussed, Allenby in February, operating by his right, captured Jericho and pushed out into the hills beyond the Jordan, where he was in more direct touch with Lawrence's Arabs. The great German attack of March on the Western Front put a stop to the Palestine project, and during April and May the 52nd and 74th Divisions complete, twenty-four British battalions, nine Yeomanry regiments and a number of other units were sent to France. It would have been more in accordance with commonsense to have done this before rather than after an attack, which had been long foreseen. A complete reorganisation of Allenby's army followed. Two Indian divisions, the 3rd and 7th, were transferred to him from Mesopotamia, two Indian cavalry divisions came from France, while the 10th, 53rd, 60th and 75th Divisions were gradually converted into Indian divisions, each of three British and nine Indian battalions. The 54th Division remained the only purely British division in the army. Rumour was rife during the summer that it too was to go to France, and it was actually moved down to the base preparatory to embarkation. But as the worst of the crisis on the Western Front was then over, it remained to take its part in the final overthrow of the Turks.

The story of the battles of Megiddo is well known. The part of the 54th Division in Allenby's plan was to form the pivot of the right of the 21st Corps, while the bulk of that corps drove in the Turkish right, and then wheeling to its right cleared the way for the mounted troops to advance along the coast and sweep round the enemy's right. The 54th Division went into its position for the

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battle on September 9th. It held a line in the foot hills of Judea north of the Ludd-Messudieh railway opposite to the Bureid Ridge. It was believed that the Turks were only holding this ridge with outposts, and it was proposed that the division should seize it and advance from it on September 19th, the day fixed for the general attack. On the night of the 9th-10th, a patrol sent out by the 5th Battalion found that the Turks on the ridge were in greater strength than was supposed, and the patrol-leader, Lieutenant Spurgeon, was killed. Lieut.-Colonel E. W. Brighten therefore decided to make a raid on the ridge to clear up the situation. This raid was made in the night of September 10th-11th by a party of fifty men of the 5th Battalion under Captain J. T. Yarde, M.C. The raid encountered strong opposition, was heavily counter-attacked, and found that the Turkish defences on the ridge were much more elaborate than had been supposed. Captain J. T. Yarde, who handled his men skilfully, won a bar to his M.C. Second Lieutenant A. Hope was wounded. When the Turks counter-attacked, the situation was saved by the gallantry of Private Samuel Needham, who charged the Turks with the bayonet single-handed, and accounting for many of the enemy, covered the withdrawal of his comrades. For this prompt and brave action, Needham was awarded the V.C.

The information which Captain J. T. Yarde's raid obtained enabled the plan of action of the division to be modified, and it was decided to include the Bureid Ridge in the main attack. For this attack, Allenby had approximately 12,000 sabres, 57,000 rifles and 540 guns, and of these, 9,000 sabres, 35,000 infantry and 383 guns were concentrated on his left.

The Turkish strength was about 32,000 men with 400 guns, and of these only 8,000 infantry and 131 guns were ready to meet the mass attack by Allenby's left. The enemy had been outmanoeuvred by the secrecy of

preparation and the skill with which his attention had been drawn to his left.

On September 19th, when the battle started, the main body of the 21st Corps broke through the Turkish right and opened the way for the cavalry, which started on its mission. Meanwhile the 54th Division had attacked with Kefr Kassim as its objective, reached by 4.30 p.m., the 5th Battalion being in divisional reserve. During this advance it came under heavy shell fire in which the gallant Captain J. T. Yarde fell mortally wounded. For the next three days the division remained blocking the southern exit from the hills of Samaria, while the remainder of the 21st Corps poured into them from the west and the mounted troops swept round to the north. By the evening of September 22nd the Turkish retreat had become a rout, and during the next three weeks, the remnant were driven out of Palestine and through Syria. Following the pursuit, the 5th Battalion entered Acre early in October, and there it remained until October 24th. It then moved forward to Beirut, which was reached on October 31st, the day on which the armistice with Turkey was concluded. On December 4th, the battalion embarked for Egypt, where the winter was spent, and on December 20th it took part with the 54th Division in the victory march through Cairo. In February 1920, the battalion was re-formed at home under Lieut.-Colonel J. Clutton, T.D., with a fine record of service behind it. Lieut.-Colonel E. W. Brighten, C.M.G., D.S.O., T.D., who had led it with great distinction throughout the war, had taken a regular commission in the 2nd Battalion, which he now commands.

To go back to the Western Front ; there the turn of the tide began on July 18th, when Foch in the second battle of the Marne directed a counter-attack on the German front between the Marne and the Aisne. On

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August 8th, Haig launched the Fourth Army under Sir Henry Rawlinson against the Germans on the Amiens front, and at once won that vital success which caused Ludendorff to speak of August 8th as "the black day in the history of the German Army in the war." Two days before the battle of Amiens, the 18th Division was holding the line north of the Somme near Corbie, and there the 54th Brigade was heavily attacked. The attack was beaten off but the brigade suffered heavily, the 2nd Battalion under Lieut.-Colonel A. E. Percival \* losing two officers and 114 other ranks. It is greatly to the credit of those who took part in that fight that though the Germans took a number of prisoners, and everyone knew that there was something in preparation, the enemy obtained no inkling of the secret of August 8th. Its losses on August 6th unfitted the 54th Brigade for an immediate return to battle, and so the 2nd Battalion was deprived of a part in the victory of Amiens. Its turn came a fortnight later.

The 18th Division had then moved northwards and joined the Third Army on the Albert front, and on August 22nd the 54th Brigade attacked south of Albert. By 10 a.m. the 2nd Battalion had gained its objective, Shamrock Hill, and about the same time, the 35th Brigade had captured Albert. The Germans on this front had been driven over the Ancre. In this action the commander of the 54th Brigade, Brig.-General Sadleir Jackson, was wounded, and the command of the brigade devolved temporarily on Lieut.-Colonel A. E. Percival.

The day before, August 21st, the 4th and 6th Corps of the Third Army had attacked north of the Ancre, and for this attack the 5th Division and the 63rd Division had been brought into the 4th Corps, so that both the 1st and 4th Battalions were engaged on the same front. The 1st

\* Now Lieut.-Colonel A. E. Percival, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., The Cheshire Regiment.

Battalion, advancing from Buchoy in a thick fog, passed through the 37th Division, which had taken the German front lines and reached its objective 1,500 yards further on, when in turn the 1st Norfolks went through. In this attack and during the consolidation of the position, the battalion lost Captains G. de C. Millais and H. J. West and Second Lieutenant H. Maw killed, and Lieutenant W. M. Stanton wounded, the casualties in the ranks being forty-six. Though the enemy was yielding, he was fighting stoutly, and on August 23rd in an attempt to extend our success by an attack on the German line in front of Achiet-le-Petit, the battalion had a hard time. Indeed, but for the gallant leadership of Lieut.-Colonel H. Courtenay, M.C., who fell mortally wounded, and the timely co-operation of two tanks, the attack would have failed. Besides Colonel H. Courtenay, Lieutenants G. Abbott, H. J. A. Watson, E. I. F. Nailer, A. R. C. Eaton, R. H. P. Arnholtz, F. H. Fox and W. T. Paine were killed, and Lieutenants H. J. Snashall and F. J. Kelf were wounded; the losses amongst other ranks were 129. On August 21st the 63rd Division on the left of the 5th, passed through the 37th Division after the capture of the first objective, and went on to establish itself about midway between Logeast Wood and Achiet-le-Grand. Here on the 22nd, enemy counter-attacks were beaten off, and on the 23rd, the 37th Division in turn went through the 63rd to continue the advance. This brought to a close the Regiment's part in the battle of Albert.

On that day, August 23rd, Sir Douglas Haig issued a stirring appeal to his armies, declaring that the time had come to press the enemy wherever he was yielding with the utmost boldness. Haig was in fact the first to see the prospect of victory in 1918. The Fourth, Third and First Armies under the inspiration of this message, pressed on. On August 29th, Bapaume was captured, and on September 1st the Australians entered Peronne, while the

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enemy had begun to withdraw from the salient in the north which he had created in the battle of the Lys. Already in three weeks we had achieved more than in three months of bitter fighting in the first battle of the Somme. In these operations, known as the battle of Bapaume, the 2nd Battalion on August 29th entered Combles after capturing Leuze Wood, but it was not until September 1st that the whole village was in our hands. In this fighting the battalion took 188 prisoners, a number corresponding almost exactly to its casualties from the beginning of its advance on August 22nd, six officers and 186 other ranks. The 1st Battalion in this battle advanced north of Bapaume in brigade reserve, and on September 1st dug in in front of Fremicourt, which was carried the next day. The enemy gave way then, and on September 3rd the battalion followed him up along the Cambrai railway to near Hermies. Second Lieutenant A. Hayes was wounded, the casualties in the other ranks being ninety-three.

The battle of Bapaume and the pursuit which followed it brought us approximately into the positions we had held at the end of the German retreat of 1917, and we were once more within reach of the Hindenburg line. The momentous question had then to be decided, should we assault these formidable defences? The British Government, still doubtful of the chances of victory in 1918, hesitated to authorise so dangerous an enterprise, but Haig answered the question with an unhesitating "Yes."

In the battles of the Hindenburg line, which undoubtedly decided the question as to when the war would be won, the 18th Division in the 3rd Corps, which formed the left of the Fourth Army, began the battle with the attack on Ronssoy, which had been organised as an advanced work of the Hindenburg system, and was held by the 1st Guard Grenadier Regiment. The 2nd Battalion was under the command of Major L. H. Keep,

M.C., and its task was to leap-frog through the 7th Royal West Kents and clear the southern portion of Ronssoy. This task it quickly accomplished, some 400 prisoners, thirty machine guns and three trench mortars being captured. Major L. H. Keep was wounded but remained at duty. Lieutenants A. E. Ogle, W. S. Oliver Jones, J. M. Glen, E. S. D. Cline, Second Lieutenants S. E. Dancer, J. Kerr, H. Russell, M.M., and W. R. Smith were wounded, the casualties in the other ranks being thirty-three killed, ninety-nine wounded and six missing. Sergeant Reynolds on this day won the D.C.M., and Privates Suffolk and Jary the Military Medal.

It was decided to follow up this success by attacking the remainder of the enemy's strong post in the front of the Hindenburg line on September 21st, and in this scheme the objective of the 2nd Battalion was Duncan Post, to be attacked on the 22nd. The enemy put up a stout resistance, and success hung in the balance, but eventually at 3 p.m. under the direction of Major L. H. Keep, and thanks to the initiative and enterprise of Lieutenants R. T. Oldfield \* and W. Pennington, Duncan Post was carried. That night the battalion was relieved, and went back for a short rest. What the authorities thought of the battalion's conduct in this fighting is shown by the honours won. Major L. H. Keep, M.C., gained the D.S.O., Lieutenant R. T. Oldfield the bar to the M.C., Captain G. E. Gott, Lieutenants R. B. Rednall and W. Pennington the M.C., Sergeant Ellis a bar to his D.C.M., Sergeants Collins and Barford and Private Gurney, M.M., the D.C.M., and nineteen Military Medals were also gained. In the fighting of the 21st and 22nd, Lieutenant W. G. Samuels was killed, Lieutenant S. G. Hague died of wounds, Captain G. E. Gott, Lieutenant H. B. Stewart, Second Lieutenants J. C. Bowen and D. C. Davies, Lieutenants R. T. Oldfield and W. R. Harrison

\* Now Captain R. T. Oldfield, M.C.

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were wounded, and Second Lieutenant W. R. Smith was missing, the total losses being 1 officer and 25 other ranks killed, 1 officer and 5 other ranks missing, 6 officers and 76 other ranks wounded, and 1 officer and 2 other ranks died of wounds.

All was now ready for the Great Adventure of the attack on the main Hindenburg system. This was begun by the Third and First Armies in the battle of Cambrai on September 27th. The 1st Battalion in the 5th Division was on the right of this battle front, and at 7.52 a.m. it advanced and captured Beaucamp, only to be driven out by a determined German counter-attack. The battalion hung on to the outskirts of the village, and next day the enemy evacuated it. In this fight, Captain H. C. Loe, M.C., and Second Lieutenant H. Hutchinson were killed, Captain A. O. R. Beale, Lieutenant F. H. Melville and Second Lieutenants H. T. Morris, J. T. Laughton and G. W. Blackwell were wounded, and the casualties in the other ranks were 135.

• On September 29th the 1st Battalion following up the enemy, crossed the Peronne-Cambrai railway and reached the Vacquerie-Gonnelle Road, Captain A. H. Wakefield by skilful leading of a small party under heavy machine gun fire capturing seventy-five prisoners. Lieutenants C. G. Wilkins, W. R. T. Brandeth and F. Whateley Knight were wounded, and there were eleven other casualties. Continuing the pursuit on the 30th, the battalion reached the banks of the Escaut south of Crevecourt, and was then relieved.

Moving further north, the 4th Battalion, in the 63rd Division, had on September 26th reached Quéant under Lieut.-Colonel C. C. Harman, D.S.O.,\* and moved on to a position of assembly at Mœuvres. Advancing thence on the 27th the battalion had a stiff fight on the banks of the Canal du Nord, capturing six guns and a number of

\* Now commanding 1st Royal Sussex Regiment.

prisoners. Little progress was made on the 28th, but on the 29th the battalion was established in the Faubourg de Paris on the south-western outskirts of Cambrai. There it remained until October 1st, when it was relieved, having lost in the attack on the Hindenburg line, 4 officers and 25 other ranks killed, 6 officers and 138 other ranks wounded, and 20 other ranks missing. After a short rest the battalion was back at Rumilly on October 7th, and that day was in brigade reserve when the 188th Brigade captured the village of Niergnies south-east of Cambrai, which brought about the fall of the town. The 63rd Division was then relieved and transferred to the First Army.

The forcing of the Hindenburg line brought about a dramatic change on the Western Front. By the middle of October, our right was established on the Selle in the neighbourhood of Le Cateau, where we had begun to assemble in August 1914, our centre was on the outskirts of Douai, and our left within sight of Menin. We were in country which had been little touched by the devastation of trench warfare, and were engaged in the strange experience of open warfare. The end was at last in sight.

Ludendorff after throwing up the sponge, had changed his mind and decided to make another stand, and that stand produced the battle of the Selle. The battle began on October 17th with an attack by the Fourth Army southwards from Le Cateau, and by the First French Army on its left west of the Sambre and Oise Canal. The 13th Corps formed the left of our Fourth Army, and attacked at and on either side of Le Cateau. During the first phase of the battle, in which the passage of the Selle was forced, the 18th Division was in corps reserve. It passed through to the front on the night of the 21st-22nd, the 54th Brigade taking up its position just east of the Selle and north of Le Cateau. The attack was made on the night of the 22nd-23rd, the 2nd Battalion leading

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that of the 54th Brigade. It quickly captured Richmont Mill and the gullies of the small stream which flows through the mill into the Selle. It then went on to secure its objective, the orchards just south of the village of Forest, where the 1st Royal Fusiliers had passed through to gain the ridge above Epinette Farm. The battalion was then withdrawn into reserve in Forest. It had captured 100 prisoners, 3 guns, 3 trench mortars and about 60 machine guns. Lieutenant C. H. Hart was killed, Second Lieutenant W. H. S. Wilford, M.M., died of wounds, Second Lieutenants C. J. Vowles and W. Ashton, M.C., were wounded, 30 other ranks were killed, 127 wounded, and 8 missing. Lieutenants H. D. Chester and H. B. Lang, and Second Lieutenant W. Tysoe, D.S.O., won the M.C. for gallant leading on this day. Sergeants Duller and Rickard, Privates Lardner and Flute the D.C.M., and 15 military medals were awarded.

Early on the 24th the battalion was back on the battle-front to support the Northamptons in the attack on the brigade's final objective, the south-western edge of the Mormal Forest. The advance began in the dusk at 4 a.m. ; the country being very enclosed, the barrage was lost, and the two supporting battalions, the 2nd Battalion and the Royal Fusiliers, were soon mixed up with the Northamptons, while the enemy was making a determined stand on the ridge in front of Bousies. The check which resulted was resolved primarily by two men. Lieut.-Colonel A. E. Percival came up and coolly sorted out the confused mass of men in the firing line, reorganising the battlefield. Lieutenant F. W. Hedges of the Bedfords was attached to the 6th Northamptons, and his company was on the right of the brigade front. Crawling up the ridge with one sergeant, and followed at some distance by a Lewis gun section, he got on the flank of the line of German machine gun posts, killed the first German machine gunner and then disposed of two more machine

gun posts, taking fourteen prisoners. The Lewis gun section then came up, and all the remaining machine gun posts were captured. This bold and courageous action, for which Lieutenant F. W. Hedges was awarded the V.C., enabled the brigade to sweep forward to its final objective. Captain P. J. Reiss, M.C., M.M., Second Lieutenants G. A. H. Dysart and W. C. Hall were wounded, nine other ranks were killed, thirty-nine wounded and four missing. After this action the 54th Brigade went out of the line for forty-eight hours' rest.

After its part in the battles of the Hindenburg line, the 1st Battalion had been withdrawn for rest near Havrincourt Wood. Thence on October 9th it with the 5th Division began to follow up our advance. On October 14th, Lieut.-Colonel C. E. G. Shearman, D.S.O., M.C., arrived and took over command from Lieut.-Colonel W. S. Chirnside, M.C., and five days later the battalion entered Caudry on that battlefield of Le Cateau in which it had fought in August 1914. Thence it was on the move early on October 20th to take its part in the share of the Third Army in the battle of Selle. The front of the 5th Division was on the west bank of the river just above Solesmes. The 1st Battalion passed the night of the 20th-21st near Briastre, crossing to the east bank of the river. Thence it advanced at dusk on the 22nd for the attack on Beaurain. It was heavily shelled in its assembly position, and suffered about 100 casualties. Lieut.-Colonel C. E. G. Shearman was amongst the wounded, and the command again devolved on Lieut.-Colonel W. S. Chirnside. Despite these losses, when zero hour arrived, the battalion, pushing forward with the 1st Cheshires behind an excellent barrage, quickly gained its objective, the Beaurain Ridge. The losses, nearly all due to the shelling before the advance, included Second Lieutenants W. H. T. Cothill and C. O. Fowler, and fourteen other ranks killed, five other ranks missing, besides Lieut.-Colonel

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C. E. G. Shearman, Captain F. W. Ballance, Lieutenant B. L. Pavey,\* Second Lieutenants H. Trasler, D.C.M., S. G. Fisher, J. Hollingshead and R. L. Walker, and the Rev. J. B. Mayal, wounded. The wounded in the other ranks amounted to 105. The advance to victory was anything but a walk-over. After the battle the battalion went back to Caudry.

The stage was now set for the last scene of the war on the Western Front, the battle of the Sambre. In this battle the task of the 18th Division was to advance through the Mormal Forest, and in that advance the 2nd Battalion in a dashing attack made with the aid of tanks, captured Preux-au-bois on November 4th, taking 300 prisoners, 20 machine guns and 3 heavy trench mortars. This feat enabled the division to clear the remainder of the forest with little trouble. Second Lieutenant S. H. Abbott and 7 men were killed in this attack, Second Lieutenants W. Ashton, M.C., W. Pennington, S. A. Hill and 33 other ranks were wounded, and 3 were missing. Captain R. L. V. Doake won the D.S.O. for gallant leading in this, the battalion's last, fight in the war. Lieutenants D. F. Howard, A. W. Giffard-Smith, Second Lieutenant J. L. Whittingham and Captain J. Thompson, R.A.M.C., the battalion's medical officer, the M.C.; Company Sergeant-Major Clarke, Sergeants Fynn and Robertson the D.C.M., and nine military medals were awarded. Armistice Day found the battalion in Le Cateau.

The 1st Battalion had an easier time in the final advance. On November 4th it had moved into Louvignies south of Le Quesnoy for the battle of the Sambre. The 5th Division was in support, and met with little opposition. Swinging to its right through the western edge of the Mormal Forest, the battalion had reached the centre of the forest by November 5th, suffering only seven casualties. On November 6th it advanced to La

\* Now Captain B. L. Pavey, Regular Army Reserve of Officers.

Porquerie on the north-eastern edge of the forest, and in this, its last, action suffered thirteen casualties from German shells. To the general regret of all ranks, almost the last shell fired by the enemy at the battalion killed Sergeant Neale, who had served with the Regiment throughout the war, and was one of the battalion scouts at Mons in 1914. On November 11th the battalion, its work well done, was back at Louvignies.

The 4th Battalion, after the battles of the Hindenburg line, had with the 63rd Division been transferred to the First Army, and after a period of rest and training it moved forward behind the front of the First Army, reaching Audregnies on November 8th. Advancing thence through Wiheries, it reached the front line in the afternoon, and that night took part in the attack on Blaugies, which was captured by 7 a.m. on the 9th. Following up the retreating enemy on the 9th, the battalion captured Quevy Le Petit, suffering twenty-seven casualties. Continuing the advance eastwards, in the early hours of November 11th it drove the enemy out of Harmignies, which lies south-east of Mons.

So ends the story of the Regiment's part in the Great War. It had suffered 18,894 casualties, killed, wounded and missing, and of those losses, more than half, 9,773, had fallen upon the 1st and 2nd Battalions, which had fought through the war from beginning to end, except for the brief visit of the 1st Battalion to Italy, on the Western Front.

I cannot end the story more fittingly than with the noble message which Field-Marshal Sir Ferdinand Foch, G.C.B., O.M., to give him his British titles, sent to the Regiment in December 1928 :

"I gladly respond to the request for a special message to the men of the Bedfordshire Regiment and Ex-Service men of the County generally, who are now facing with the same high courage they displayed on the battlefield, the

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problems of peace. To them and theirs I send my best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. I retain proud memories of my association with the men of the British Army during the days when we were comrades in arms, and I cannot look back without recalling some of the magnificent feats of arms which have added to the military glory of the British Army, and the imperishable renown of the men who faced the terrible ordeals that were their daily lot in those days of stress and storm. I congratulate those of you who have come back to your loved ones. I have been grieved to learn from time to time that industrial conditions in England make life hard for some of you and yours. It is my earnest prayer that in the coming year the sun of prosperity may shine to warm and brighten your existence.

" Of the Bedfordshire Regiment I have many memories. In my student days I knew something of its history in the many campaigns it had gone through, and in the archives of the French Army there are records from other days of the part which your historic Regiment had played in the many occasions when our two countries were engaged in conflict. My first acquaintance with the County Regiment came in the summer of 1916, when I was in command of the French forces co-operating with the English in the Battle of the Somme. My army formed a sort of hinge linking the British troops on the Somme with their comrades to the south. At a critical stage in the operations, the troops under my command were in liaison with a division to which a battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment was attached. It so happened that the enemy made at that time a fierce thrust with the intention of breaking the " hinge " at the point where it linked with the British on the Somme. For reasons that need not be gone into here, the counter-thrust came before I was ready, and it was of the utmost importance to the general plan that the line should hold at all costs. Marshal Haig

was not in a position to strengthen the line at the threatened point, and thus it fell out that the men of the Bedfordshire were called on to bear the brunt of an attack in force. The battalion concerned had before that sustained heavy losses, and had just been re-formed with fresh drafts from England. Most of the men were new to the experience, and it was no reflection on them if we felt some anxiety regarding their ability to come through the ordeal set them. In the presence of the Marshal Haig, the Colonel of the Regiment was asked if he could be sure that his men would hold the line until the critical moment had passed. His answer was, ‘I am a Bedfordshire man ; I know the men of the county, and I know that they will not betray the trust you have placed in them. I am going back to tell them what is expected of them, and though many of them have never been under fire before, I vouch for them. They will hold the line.’ And they did, though the cost was a heavy one, for the enemy threw in at that point some of their best troops and rained on the trenches of the Bedfords such a storm of shell fire as had never before been experienced in that sector.

“ One incident following on that experience I may be allowed to recall, because it has a bearing on the relations of the King, for whose recovery we are all praying, with his troops. I was in the company of His Majesty when the Bedfords were retiring after relief, and we came on a convoy of wounded. We stopped to speak to some of the men, and among the number was a mere lad from a village in Bedfordshire of which I forget the name. It was obvious the lad could not survive, and the King spoke words of comfort to him. ‘It is no use, your Majesty,’ said the lad sadly, ‘I know I am booked through, and I am proud to die for you and the Empire, but it will break my poor mother’s heart. I am her only son, and I ran away from school when I was only fifteen

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to join up. I persuaded them that I was nineteen. If only you could write her my last message it might help her.' The King asked the boy what message he had to send, and this reply I shall never forget : 'Just this. Good-bye, best of mothers. I have done my duty. It will be hard for you at first, but God in time will help you to understand that you are happier with me in a soldier's grave than you could ever have been with me in a shirker's soft job, when man's work was to be done here.' The King's eyes filled with tears as he took down the message, and my own were not dry. I know that, though the King was worn out with a strenuous day, he kept in touch with the dressing station until he learned of the death of the lad, and then with his own hand he wrote and posted the lad's last message, with a note of personal sympathy to the mother. Somewhere in your county to-day there must be a mother who possesses this proof of your King's interest in the men of the Army and his deep human sympathy.

"In greeting the men who have come back, let me not forget the widows and orphans, the fathers and mothers, the brothers and sisters, and all who are akin to those heroic souls who laid down their lives for the common cause. It is always hard for us to understand the fate that takes our loved ones from us, and from the bottom of my heart I sympathise with those who at this period of festivity mourn the absent ones. To them I have just this message, a message in some respects identical with that of the boy of whom I have spoken : 'Hard as it is to lose your loved ones, you can be sure that they died happy, because they knew they were dying to make possible the victory that came to our arms, and among that band of those who died, there is not one who would have hesitated a moment had he been given the choice between coming back alive to an England enslaved by Germany or of dying that the ones he loved might live

free for ever more.' That was the spirit in which the men of Bedfordshire and other English counties gave their lives. Let us not forget them now. They are worthy of every tribute we can pay to them, and they have bequeathed to those who are left behind a precious memory that I am sure will be revered for evermore.

"In France we have not forgotten your dead and their achievements. All over the country we have cemeteries to remind us of the great debt we owe to you, and you can rest assured that at this season of goodwill, the French people will not forget the graves of the men of your County Regiment, or indeed the graves of any Britons who sleep their last sleep in our midst. In the battle zones our peasants pay homage from time to time to your dead, and there are hamlets in France where the names and the accents of men of the Bedfordshire Regiment are remembered by those among whom they lived and fought in those nightmare days before victory came to crown our efforts.

"It was in my thought to include Bedford in the list of English towns I was to visit to make acquaintance with comrades of war days, but unfortunately my health has not permitted this programme to be carried out. I hope, however, that one day I shall be able to visit you, and in the meantime I repeat my best wishes for the happiness of all associated with the Regiment and with the county in the year that lies ahead."

In 1919, His Majesty the King directed that the title of the Regiment should be changed to The Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment in order that a closer bond might be created between the Regiment and the counties which had kept its ranks filled during the Great War. In 1928, General the Earl of Cavan, K.P., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., G.B.E., a Hertfordshire man, became its Colonel on the death of Major-General T. D. Pilcher, C.B.



APPENDIX I

**COLONELS OF THE REGIMENT FROM ITS  
FORMATION TO THE PRESENT DAY**

Colonel Archibald Douglas . . . . .	1688
Colonel Robert Hodges . . . . .	1688-1692
Colonel the Hon. James Stanley (later Earl of Derby) . . . . .	1692-1705
Brig.-General Francis Godfrey . . . . .	1705-1711
Brig.-General Henry Durell . . . . .	1711-1712
Brig.-General Hans Hamilton . . . . .	1713-1715
Lieut.-Colonel Richard Viscount Irving . . . . .	1715-1717
Lieut.-Colonel John Cholmely . . . . .	1717-1724
Lieut.-Colonel Henry Earl of Deloraine, K.B. . . . .	1724-1730
Colonel Roger Handasyd . . . . .	1730-1763
Colonel the Hon. Robert Brudenell . . . . .	1763-1765
Lieut.-General Sir William Draper, K.B. . . . .	1765-1766
Lieut.-General James Gisborne . . . . .	1766-1778
Lieut.-General James Robertson . . . . .	1778-1788
Lieut.-General the Hon. Thomas Bruce . . . . .	1788-1797
Lieut.-General Henry Bowyer . . . . .	1797-1808
Lieut.-General Sir Charles Green, Bart. . . . .	1808-1814
Lieut.-General Sir George Prevost, Bart. . . . .	1814-1816
Lieut.-General Hugh Mackay Gordon . . . . .	1816-1823
Lieut.-General William Carr Viscount Beresford, G.C.B., K.H. . . . .	1823-1854
Lieut.-General F. E. Napier, C.B. . . . .	1854-1858
General G. H. Berkeley . . . . .	1858-1863
General George Macdonald . . . . .	1863-1893
Major-General (Hon. Lieut.-General) Sir J. W. Cox, K.C.B. . . . .	1893-1903
Major-General (Hon. Lieut.-General) J. T. Dalyell . . . . .	1903-1909
Major-General Richard H. Curteis . . . . .	1909-1914
Major-General Thomas D. Pilcher, C.B. . . . .	1914-1928
General the Earl of Cavan, K.P. . . . .	1928-

## APPENDIX II

### THE REGIMENT'S RECORD OF WAR SERVICE

1689-1695	.	.	<i>The War of the League of Augsburg.</i>
1689	.	.	Action of Walcourt.
1692	.	.	Battle of Steenkirk.
1693	.	.	Battle of Landen.
1695	.	.	Siege of Namur.
1701-1712	.	.	<i>The War of the Spanish Succession.</i>
1702	.	.	Siege of Kaiserwerth.
			Siege of Venloo.
			Siege of Ruremonde.
			Siege of Stevenswaert.
			Siege of Liége.
1703	.	.	Siege of Huy.
			Siege of Limburg.
1704	.	.	Battle of Schellenberg.
			Battle of Blenheim.
			Siege of Landau.
1705	.	.	Forcing of the lines of Brabant.
1706	.	.	Battle of Ramillies.
1707	.	.	Battle of Oudenarde.
1708	.	.	Siege of Lille.
1709	.	.	Siege of Tournai.
			Battle of Malplaquet.
			Siege of Mons.
1710	.	.	Action of Pont-a-Vendin.
1710	.	.	Siege of Douai.
			Siege of Aire.
			Siege of St. Venant.
1711	.	.	Forcing of "Non Plus Ultra" lines.
			Siege of Bouchain.
1712	.	.	Siege of Le Quesnoi.
1715-6	.	.	<i>Suppression of the Rebellion in Scotland.</i>

## APPENDIX II

<i>1739-41</i>	.	<i>War of Jenkins' Ear.</i>
<i>1740</i>	.	Expedition to West Indies.
<i>1741</i>	.	Attack on Carthagena.
<i>1745</i>	.	<i>Suppression of the Rebellion in Scotland.</i>
<i>1775-1782</i>	.	<i>War of American Independence.</i>
<i>1779</i>	.	Defence of Baton Rouge. Defence of Savannah.
<i>1781</i>	.	Defence of Pensacola.
<i>1795-1796</i>	.	<i>The Maroon War.</i>
<i>1803-1815</i>	.	<i>The War with France.</i>
<i>1804</i>	.	Capture of Surinam.
<i>1814</i>	.	<i>The War with the United States.</i>
<i>1815</i>	.	Army of Occupation—Paris.
<i>1896</i>	.	<i>The Chitral Expedition.</i> Capture of the Malakand Pass.
<i>1899-1902</i>	.	<i>The South African War.</i>
<i>1900</i>	.	Actions about Colesberg. Norval's Pont.
<i>1900-02</i>	.	Operations in the Orange River Colony
<i>1914-1918</i>	.	<i>The Great War.</i>
<i>1914</i>	.	Battle of Mons. Battle of Le Cateau. Battle of the Marne. Battle of the Aisne. Battle of La Bassée. First Battle of Ypres. Battle of Langemark. Battle of Cheluvelt. Battle of Nonne Bosschen.
<i>1915</i>	.	Battle of Neuve Chapelle. Defence of Hill 60. Battle of St. Julien. Battle of Frezenberg Ridge. Battle of Bellewaerde Ridge. Battle of Aubers Ridge. Battle of Festubert. Battle of Loos. Gallipoli. Battle of Suvla Bay.
<i>1916</i>	.	Battles of the Somme. Battle of Albert.

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- 1916 . . . Battle of Bazentin Ridge.  
Battle of Delville Wood.  
Battle of Pozières Ridge.  
Battle of Guillemont.  
Battle of Flers-Courcelette.  
Battle of Morval.  
Battle of Thiepval Ridge.  
Battle of Transloy Ridges.  
Battle of the Ancre.
- 1917 . . . Battle of the Ancre.  
Battle of Arras.  
Battle of Vimy Ridge.  
First Battle of the Scarpe.  
Second Battle of the Scarpe.  
Battle of Arleux.  
Third Battle of the Scarpe.  
Capture of Oppy Wood.  
Battle of Messines.  
Third Battle of Ypres.  
Battle of Pilckem Ridge.  
Battle of Langemark.  
Battle of Polygon Wood.  
Battle of Broodseinde.  
Battle of Poelcapelle.  
Second Battle of Passchendaele.  
Battle of Cambrai.  
First Battle of Gaza.  
Second Battle of Gaza.  
Battle of Gaza-Beersheba.  
Battle of Jaffa.
- 1918 . . . First Battle of the Somme, 1918.  
First Battle of Bapaume, 1918.  
Battle of Rosières.  
Battle of the Ancre, 1918.  
Action at Villers-Brettoneux.  
Battles of the Lys.  
Battle of Hazebrouck.  
Battle of the Scherpenberg.  
Battle of Amiens.  
Second Battle of the Somme, 1918.  
Second Battle of Bapaume, 1918.  
Second Battle of Arras, 1918.  
Battles of the Hindenburg line.

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- 1918      .  
**Battle of Epehy.**  
**Battle of the Canal du Nord.**  
**Battle of St. Quentin Canal.**  
**Battle of Cambrai, 1918.**  
**Battle of the Selle.**  
**Battle of the Sambre.**  
**Pursuit to Mons.**  
**Battles of Megiddo.**

### APPENDIX III

#### BATTALIONS OF THE REGIMENT IN THE GREAT WAR

1st Regular . . .	Mobilised Mullingar August 4th, 1914 ; landed France August 16th, 1914 with 5th Division, in which it served throughout war.
2nd Regular . . .	Mobilised, Roberts Heights August 10th, 1914. Proceeded to England where it joined the 7th Division ; landed Zeebrugge October 7th, 1914. Transferred to 30th Division, December 20th, 1915. Transferred to 18th Division May 1918, absorbing 7th Battalion.
3rd Special Reserve	Mobilised August 1914 and served in defence of East Coast of England throughout the war.
4th Extra Special Reserve	Mobilised August 1914, and served in defence of East Coast of England till July 10th, 1916, when it was ordered to join 63rd Royal Naval Division in France.
1st/5th Territorial .	Mobilised August 1914. Joined 54th Division. Embarked for Gallipoli July 26th, 1915. Served with 54th Division in Gallipoli, Egypt and Palestine.
2nd/5th Territorial	Raised September 1914. Served as draft-finding unit in Home Defence Force until February 1918, when it was disbanded.
3rd/5th Territorial	Raised July 1915 ; served as draft-finding unit in Home Defence Force. Disbanded February 1919.

### APPENDIX III

- 6th Service . . . Raised at Aldershot August 19th, 1914, and joined 9th (Scottish Division); transferred to 37th Division in March 1915. Proceeded to France with 37th Division, July 1915. Disbanded in France, May 1918, being absorbed into 1st Hertfordshire Regiment.
- 7th Service . . . Raised September 1914, joined 18th Division February 1915. Embarked for France, July 1915, and served with the 18th Division until absorbed into 2nd Battalion, May 1918.
- 8th Service . . . Raised September 1914. Joined 24th Division. Embarked for France with 24th Division, August 31st, 1915. Transferred to 6th Division, October 1915. Disbanded in France, January 1918.
- 9th Service . . . Raised December 1914. Served as draft-finding unit in Home Defence Force. August 1915 became 9th (Reserve) Battalion. September 1916, absorbed into 28th Training Reserve Battalion.
- 10th Service . . . Raised December 1914. Served as draft-finding unit in Home Defence Force. September 1915 became 10th (Reserve) Battalion, and in September 1916, 27th Training Reserve Battalion. In October 1917, became 53rd (Young Soldiers') Battalion (*q.v.*).
- 11th Territorial . . . Raised December 1916, and served in Home Defence Force, mainly in East Coast Defences, until disbanded on July 31st, 1919.
- 12th (Transport Workers) . . . Raised December 1916 for transport duties at the ports; disbanded August 31st, 1919.
- 13th (Transport Workers) . . . Raised in March 1917 for transport duties in the ports. Disbanded September 1919.

## THE 16TH FOOT

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1st Garrison . . .       | Raised December 1915, mainly from old soldiers and men over age for active service. Served on garrison duty in India, February 1916 to December 1919. Disbanded January 1920. |
| 2nd Garrison . . .       | Raised on similar lines as 1st Garrison in December 1916. Served in India from February 1917 to end of 1919. Disbanded January 1920.  |
| 3rd Garrison . . .       | Raised on similar lines in January 1917. Served in Burma and India, March 1918 to December 1919. Disbanded January 1920.  |
| 51st (Graduated) . .     | Formed in February 1917 from 10th Norfolk Regiment. Employed in training young soldiers. December 1919, joined Army of the Rhine. Disbanded April 1920.                       |
| 52nd (Graduated) . .     | Formed in February 1917 from 10th Suffolk Regiment for training young soldiers. Joined Army of the Rhine, December 1919. Disbanded April 1920.                                |
| 53rd (Young<br>Soldiers) | Formed in October 1917 from 10th Reserve Battalion, mainly of youths under nineteen years. Joined Army of Rhine, December 1919. Disbanded April 1920.                         |

#### **APPENDIX IV**

##### **O V E R S E A S   D O M I N I O N   U N I T S   A F F I L I A T E D T O   T H E   R E G I M E N T**

Allied Regiment of Canadian Militia	The Prince Albert Volunteers	Prince Albert, Saskatoon
Allied Battalion of Australian Infantry	16th Battalion	Kalgoorlie
Allied Regiment of Union of South Africa Defence Forces	4th Infantry (First City)	Grahamstown

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